

Instructional Goals Explored: Teacher Candidates in the Final Clinical Experience

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## **Abstract**

This study, framed as a qualitative case study, examined the instructional goal-setting process of teacher candidates during their final clinical experience. The study followed three teacher candidates at a Midwestern university who were enrolled in their final clinical experience semester of their teacher preparation program. Methodology included document analysis and interviews. The teacher candidates set goals in four instructional areas: engagement, differentiation, classroom management, and assessment. The study found that the case study participants successfully set instructional goals using self-reflection as well as feedback from their university supervisor and their cooperating teacher. The study also found that the teacher candidates utilized prior knowledge, coursework, and field experiences to help them set their instructional goals. In order to prepare teacher candidates for their first classroom job, the instructional goal setting process will help the teacher candidates to know their strengths and areas of weaknesses, so they can incorporate those into their first professional development plan

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Pre-service teachers have interactions with K-12 students while they are taking their University coursework through on-site observations, assisting the lead teacher, leading small groups, and perhaps teaching a lesson or two. In these short interactions, pre-service teachers do not take on the role of lead teacher. It is during the final clinical experience, student teaching, where pre-service teachers engage with students in the classroom full-time. This is the first time that these students are considered “teacher candidates” and will assume the role of lead teacher and take full responsibility for the students’ engagement, specific learning needs, learning, growth, assessment and other instructional elements. For the teacher candidate who is responsible for these tasks for the first time, personal learning and growth is an important theme as he or she is completing the final clinical experience. Learning and growth can be realized and recorded through instructional goal-setting, and goal-setting by the teacher candidate during the final clinical experience is what this dissertation will explore.

#### **Importance of Study**

This study is important because it will examine teacher candidates’ instructional goal-setting during a specific time period—final clinical experience. Teacher candidates are at a critical time in their preparation as a teacher when they are completing their final clinical experience. It can be their last chance to receive mentoring from a cooperating teacher or a university supervisor in order to change their practice as a teacher. Feiman-Nemser (2003) describes this precarious time: “We misrepresent the process of learning to teach when we consider new teachers as finished products, when we assume that they mostly need to refine



existing skills, or when we treat their learning needs as signs of deficiency in their preparation. Beginning teachers have legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching” (p. 25). Many practices and elements that worked when you were a pre-service teacher work differently when you are a teacher candidate moving on the professional path to becoming a certified/licensed teacher ready to teach.

Final clinical experience is a time that has been described as the cornerstone of teacher preparation when all of their university classroom preparation is put to use in a real classroom. Valencia et al. (2009) state that “the power of student teaching [Final Clinical Experience] is legend. Teachers often proclaim it as the most valuable aspect of their preservice programs.” Since teachers often label this time as the most valuable aspect of their preservice program, this is an important time period to study and learn more about. The traditional model of final clinical experience is undergirded by the “triad” (Slick, 1997). The triad consists of the teacher candidate, the university supervisor, and the cooperating teacher. This model is used nationwide in traditional education programs. In one study that investigated the final clinical experience and the triad, Borko and Mayfield (1995), examined the relationships in four different middle school math classes of teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers and university supervisors. They concluded that all members of the triad were generally satisfied with the relationships and the experience. While everyone was generally satisfied with the relationships and experience as a whole, their analysis showed that the university supervisors and cooperating teachers had limited influence on teacher candidates’ knowledge, teaching strategies, and beliefs about teaching.

Based on this limited influence from outside sources shown in Borko and Mayfield’s study in conjunction with the importance of final clinical experience, the time can be viewed as a

time for teacher candidates to learn more about themselves and their professional identity as a teacher through goal setting and reflection. Professional identity is defined by Gee (2000) as “person narrativization of what consists of his or her (never fully formed or always potentially changing) core identity as a teacher.” The theme of learning and growth in the final clinical experience in conjunction with Gee’s definition of professional identity leads to the importance of studying instructional goal-setting in the final clinical experience. The analysis of one’s professional identity and how it is driven by instructional goals will be the overarching focus of the study. Ford (1992) defined goal setting by linking the concept to teacher motivation and describes goals as subjective representations of what individuals would like to occur, or not to occur in the future and these in turn act as organizers for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

To learn more about instructional goal-setting, final clinical experience teacher candidates will set initial goals in four areas: engagement, differentiation, classroom management, and assessment. This goal-setting will give the teacher candidate specific areas to focus on during the final clinical experience. Then, the teacher candidates will be in the field for sixty days working at their school site. During this time, they will reflect on whether they are meeting their goals or not. Further, the teacher candidates will utilize self-reflection as well as feedback from their university supervisor, their cooperating teacher, and possibly a building administrator at their school site to guide their professional growth shaped by the goals they’ve set. Teacher candidates will be given the opportunity to change or revise their set goals after the conclusion of the sixty day experience. This will demonstrate the professional growth and learning the teacher candidate gained through the experience. The goals will be set utilizing a developed tool from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education called the

Professional Competency Profile. Teacher candidates are required to complete this Professional Competency Profile as part of their Final Clinical Experience.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teacher candidates launch into their final clinical experience with different levels of confidence, knowledge, and skills in the areas of: engagement, differentiation, classroom management, and assessment. Further, as teacher candidates take on the full-time responsibility of lead teacher, inevitably, the teacher candidate will realize areas that he/she needs to set goals in order to seek improvement. In essence, it will become clearer what they don't know—what areas they see as an area of weakness. This study will see how teacher candidates' goals for instructional practices change and develop over the course of their Final Clinical Experience and the shaping of their professional identity based on their developing strengths and weaknesses. This study will focus on the development of teacher candidates as they complete their sixty day final clinical experience. When people set goals and focus on developing in a certain area, they generally get better. Instead of generally trying to improve instructional practice during this critical final clinical experience, this will narrow that focus in on four areas of instruction. Actual experience with students can change students' confidence levels and encourage students to assess their strengths, weaknesses, and areas of need. What they initially thought were their areas of need will quite possibly be different than what they think are their areas of need at the conclusion of their experience—after they've been the teacher who is responsible for the instructional decisions of the classroom. This study will also explore what influences the teacher candidate to change his or her goals if the goals did change. Was it recommendations from their university supervisor? From their cooperating teacher? From watching another peer? From their own self-reflection? Was it based on an analysis of their progress toward the goal?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the learning and growth that a teacher candidate experiences during the sixty day final clinical experience as evidenced by instructional goal-setting. The study will examine teacher candidates developing professional identities as they move from teacher candidate to seeking a full-time classroom teacher position after they graduate. The study will examine teacher candidates' reflective skills as well within the context of examining their instructional goal-setting. The instructional goal-setting will be guided by the Professional Competency Profile which is a tool created by the Office of Educator Quality in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the state of Missouri in conjunction with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) based in New Jersey. ETS developed a suite of assessments of Missouri as part of the educational reform called "Top 20 by 20" (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). It is an element of a larger evaluation tool called the Missouri Educator Evaluation System. Since the purpose of the study is to examine teacher candidates as they move from being a teacher candidate toward the next step of being a hired teacher in the classroom this study is tied to the system that evaluates new teachers in the state of Missouri. The purpose of this study is hinged on the concept that Education Preparation Program completers in the state of Missouri will launch into the Missouri Educator Evaluation System as they are hired in their first job. The Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES) is how beginning teachers are evaluated in the state of Missouri as in the case in most public schools to have a formalized evaluation system. Further, the Missouri Educator Evaluation System is also used for teacher candidates as the evaluation tool during their final clinical experience. The Professional Competency Profile is also connected to the Missouri

Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and is completed by teacher candidates at the conclusion of their final clinical experience (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015a).

This study's purpose is to help teacher candidates understand more about their professional identity and their role as a new professional. It will enable the teacher candidate to understand more about their strengths and weaknesses and hone in on areas of improvement. Additionally, the purpose is reinforced by the fact that Human Resource Directors, Principals, state Departments of Education, and Educator Preparation Program faculty will gain valuable information from the results of this study. I anticipate that these entities will gain information about: teacher candidates' professional identities, teacher candidates' reflective skills and areas of reflection, what goals are commonly set by teacher candidates, and what common areas of strengths and weaknesses are seen in teacher candidates. The tool that will be used to this end, the Professional Competency Profile will also be used by Human Resource Directors and Principals during the interview process when teacher candidates are obtaining initial jobs. The Professional Competency Profile can also be used to establish a new teacher's first Professional Development Plan. Since the evaluation system in Missouri is the same evaluation system that is used for teacher candidates, the goals that they establish during their final clinical experience can carry forth to their first Professional Development Plan. Being an informed practitioner and understanding his/her strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement is the purpose of this study and will help teacher candidates with the interview process and establishing their first Professional Development Plan with their first job.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Research has been conducted on the goals teachers have for their teaching (Butler, 2007; Hagger & Malmberg, 2011; Mansfield, Wosnitza, & Beltman, 2012). This study is situated amongst this research and will delve deeper into the sixty-day time period of Final clinical experience to see specifically what goals teacher candidates have for themselves during this time period. Further, this research will be tied to the human development research on goals articulated through action-theoretical approaches to human development and goal setting (Brandtstädter, 1998; Heider, 1958). The success of teacher candidates and early professionals in the field of teaching is significant as Districts want retention in their newly prepared teachers. Ryan and Deci (2000) highlight that a history of successful goal pursuits promotes motivation for additional goal-setting in the future while a history of failures undermine future goal setting. This further supports exploring goal setting during Final Clinical Experience.

## **Research Questions**

I will seek to determine what teacher candidates' instructional practice goals are during the onset of their Final Clinical Experience; how those goals may evolve over the course of their Final Clinical Experience, and why they made changes to their goals. Specifically, my dissertation study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the teacher candidate's initial goals and how do candidates reflect on their reasons for selecting these goals?
2. What are the teacher candidate's perceptions of their instructional goals as they reflect on their Final Clinical Experience?

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

## **Introduction**

This Literature Review will cover relevant literature from the field of Education about instructional goal-setting, and examine reflection and professional identity and how those concepts are connected to instructional goal-setting. The focus for the literature review will be on pre-service teachers and specifically the final clinical experience. An even broader view of this field of study relates to teacher motivation, and many studies and articles have been written about teacher motivation in the early years of teaching. These studies under the overarching topic of teacher motivation include studies such as: why does an individual choose to become a teacher (Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008) and why individuals stay in the profession (Hong, 2012). These topics of motivation are important to the teaching profession because it relates to teacher retention and how districts can attract and retain high-quality teachers to work with their students in the classroom. Teacher motivation is at the heart of instructional goal setting because teachers want to improve and do what is best for their students and goal setting is one way to improve (Butler, 2007). Research has been conducted on the goals teachers have for their teaching (Butler, 2007; Hagger & Malmberg, 2011; Mansfield, Wosnitza, & Beltman, 2012).

## **Goals and Goal-Setting**

Goals and Goal-Setting are the main purpose of this study, and is what will be investigated. First I will define goals and then explain more about goal-setting. Goals have been described as subjective representations of what individuals would like to occur, or not to occur in the future and these in turn act as organizers for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Ford, 1992) Ford's definition of goal settings is widely accepted and is the definition I use for this study. Hagger and Malmberg (2011) add to the definition of goals by stating that goals are objects in mind that the individual hopes for, wishes, desires, aspires to, and wants to approach. They also

address that goals are set within a time-frame, meaning that individuals know when the goal should be realized and whether it is considered a short or long term goal. The logistics of goal setting is described as: first people set up goals, determine means for reaching them, and evaluate whether and when they are likely to realize them” (p. 599).

Going beyond the definition of goals, Ames and Archer (1988) divide goals into two different categories: mastery goals which develop skills and competence and performance goals which demonstrate competence relative to others. One study done by Mansfield and Beltman (2014) explored beginning teachers’ goals and found that 23.1% of their study participants set “personal goals” in areas such as: positive sense of self and wellbeing; 53.8% of their study participants set “situated goals” in areas such as: pedagogy, further learning, and social relations; and 23.1% of their study participants set “career goals” in areas such as: employment conditions and career development (p. 60). Mansfield and Beltman also report that beginning teachers frequently set “avoidance goals” where they set goals to avoid a certain classroom practice or common “pitfall” in the classroom. There are different types of goals that can be set by teachers. This study will focus on instructional goal setting only.

To support the study of teacher candidates’ instructional goal-setting during final clinical experience, Hagger and Malmberg (2011) state the importance of goal setting: “as early as possible in their career, to generate knowledge about, on the one hand, pre-service teachers’ goals that might promote motivation, actions for realizing them in a future-oriented manner, and enhance their well-being, and, on the other hand, their concerns which might undermine motivation, inhibit actions and forethought, and hamper well-being.” Hagger and Malmberg posit that setting goals helps teachers who are just beginning look towards the future and the



personal learning and growth that can occur specifically during the sixty-day final clinical experience which is truly the beginning of this very early time in their teaching career.

While the Mansfield and Beltman (2014) study does examine beginning teachers' goals, Butler (2007) highlights this dearth of studies on teacher motivation and goals. She states, "it has not generated conceptual motives of practicing teachers or on the consequences of different goals. Indeed, in the absence of coherent theoretical frameworks, it is not clear how initial goals can be expected to influence either teachers or their students" (p. 241). This establishes the need for this study and the exploration of the study population of teacher candidates which is a different population even from the Mansfield and Beltman study.

## **Reflection**

Reflection will be part of this study because teacher candidates will reflect on their final clinical experience and the extent to which they are meeting their instructional goals they set for the experience. An examination of the historical context of reflection follows to here to support this. Dewey's 1933 book *How We Think* set off the reflective practice movement. In his book, he describes a model for reflection. He considered reflection to be a special form of problem solving, thinking to resolve an issue which involved a careful ordering of ideas and linking ideas together. Lee (2005) hones in on these descriptors to encapsulate Dewey's work: "an experience, spontaneous interpretation of the experience, naming the problem(s) or the question(s) that arises out of the experience, generating possible explanations for the problem(s) or question(s) posed, ramifying the explanations into full-blown hypotheses, and experimenting or testing the selected hypotheses (p. 701). Countless books and articles have been written about reflection since then. Schön published several books in the 1980's that continued Dewey's thought on reflection. Schön's work really "kicked off" the current popularity of reflection as an

educational focus and movement. Similarly Lee (2005) encapsulates Schön's work with the following process words: "reflection-in-action, problematic situation, frame/reframe the problem, experimentation, review consequences/implementation" (p. 701). Schön's concept of "reflection-in-action" is key to this study because this is where teacher candidates will be simultaneously reflecting and doing—the "doing" being teaching in the classroom. This idea will be demonstrated in that the goals will be thought of based on the actions and reactions in the classroom.

Reflection can be described as a journey or a new way to see things. Freese (2006) has the following quote posted on her door at the University of Hawaii: "'The journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing them with new eyes'" (Marcel Proust). In Freese's article she examines reflection as a tool to help a teacher discover their "teacher selves"; this relates to professional identity which is examined in the following section. She follows one of her students whom she calls Ryan as he moves through the Master's program and works through being closed-minded and avoiding taking risks (p. 111). As a result of his reflection he was able to "frame and reframe his thinking about teaching" (p. 112). Freese focuses on growth of a teacher over a long period of time and states that: "as teacher educators we need to explore our preservice teachers' thinking and "give reason" (Schön) to their actions, since the preservice teachers' knowledge or view of teaching may be quite different from the mentor's or supervisor's views of teaching and learning" (p. 116) This idea of "frame and reframe" is a common way of explaining reflection, and Freese's case study will inform the methods for this study.

There have been many explorations about specific methods of reflection and

how they apply to education. How people reflect and in what format is another area of research within reflection. Collier (1999) lists specific methods of reflections: reflective journals, reflective interviews, peer observation conferences, and group seminars (p. 173) Reflective interviews centered first on the intern's impression of the experience, followed by discussion of specific elements of the lesson: planning/preparation, lesson theme, key ideas, instructional methods, and classroom management" (p. 175). Reflective interviews will be used in this study in order to gain understanding of the teacher candidates' reflective process used in instructional goal-setting.

Goal-setting and reflection and analyzed together in a systematic approach described as "goal-directed reflection" by Lorson, Goodway, and Hovatter (2007). In their study, they give structure and direction to reflection by tying it directly to goal-setting. The structure is present in the process which is described as: describing an act of teaching, teaching, producing a critique of the teaching performance, and the setting of goals in order to produce thoughtful, reflective, effective teachers. The premise of the study is that although many educator preparation programs agree that reflection is important, often reflection only recounts the events that occurred and possibly outline what might be done differently in the future. They describe these pitfalls saying they "do not connect their teaching behaviors to student responses, fail to identify the critical aspects of a teaching situation, and are unable to prioritize personal teaching goals" (p. 42). The authors found that the depth and insightful nature of their students' reflections improved significantly when tying their reflection directly to goal-setting.

Long and Stuart (2004) examined reflection in a mathematics methods course in an educator preparation program and focused on the beliefs that preservice teachers have and how those beliefs affect their instruction and understanding of concepts. Personal understanding and

application of learning theories was constantly tested by the study's participants as they reflected on how what they believed about teaching and the best teaching methods was affected by their beliefs about teaching and learning. This idea of beliefs is tied to the concept of "efficacy and goal-setting" which is the next section in the literature review.

### **Efficacy and Goal-Setting**

Self-efficacy and goal-setting are two concepts that intertwine, and studies have been conducted on how self-efficacy affects goal-setting. Self-efficacy is defined as a reflection of both an individual's self-perceived ability and a motivational component that connects to goals. Locke, Frederick, Lee, & Bobko, (1984) connect that an individual's "self-efficacy has been found to affect choice of goal level, with higher goals and ultimately with higher performance." The origins of self-efficacy have also been explored; studies have demonstrated that there are several key sources: past performance, psychological states, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion (Locke et al., 1984).

### **Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile**

This study focuses on the Missouri Professional Competency Profile which is the final element of a longer performance assessment that teacher candidates complete during their Final Clinical Experience—the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment (MoPTA). The MoPTA is the capstone assessment for Schools of Education in the State of Missouri. All Teacher Candidates in Missouri must complete this assessment in order to gain certification/licensure in the state of Missouri. The MoPTA is part of the programmatic redesign of the education system in the state of Missouri based on the Top 10 by 20 plan "which is a major improvement effort which aims for student achievement in Missouri to rank among the top 10 performing states by

the year 2020” (<http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/Top10by20Plan-2014-15.pdf>). There are three goals in the Top 10 by 20 plan, and Goal 3 focuses on developing effective educators. Goal 3 has the most impact on Teacher Education Prep Programs. A new testing suite, the Missouri Educator Gateway Assessments (MEGA) (<http://mega.ets.org/epp>) to raise expectations and admission guidelines to educator preparation programs. I collected and analyzed students’ goals that they set in their Professional Competency Profile. Their post-Final clinical experience goals can be guided and shaped by their experiences in the classroom as well as their responses to all of the textboxes in the larger assessment which are largely based on self-reflection and differentiation.

In the *MoPTA Candidate and Educator Handbook* (2015a), the general design and overview of the MoPTA is explained: Each of the four tasks will be constructed during the teacher candidate’s clinical experience and will focus on areas of planning and teaching, such as differentiation of instruction and the decision-making process. During the clinical experience, the teacher candidates’ task submissions will provide a variety of artifacts, including student work and teacher instructional materials (p. 11).

The MoPTA was developed by a team of educators from across the state of Missouri including Higher Education Institutions and public school systems. The MoPTA is guided by the Missouri Teacher Standards and Quality Indicators and both the assessment and the Professional Competency Profile are aligned to these Standards and Quality Indicators. There are a total of thirty-six indicators which are spread out over the nine areas of practice that are divided into the standards. Missouri-certified teachers use these thirty-six indicators in professional development, and are used to develop professional development plans for teachers. Teacher candidates are expected to pass the MoPTA to demonstrate that they are reasonably able

to meet the quality indicators. The Professional Competency Profile serves as the culminating document where students take what they've learned from their Final clinical experience and from completing the MoPTA to set goals for their future teaching.

Teacher candidates know these Quality Indicators (QI's) and tie lesson plans to the QI's as they go through their coursework. There are four QI's considered the most critical to teaching success during the first year. These QIs, which are part of the professional competency profile and shape the instructional goal-setting process, are: student engagement (1.2), differentiated lesson design (2.4), classroom management (5.1), and using assessment data to improve instruction (7.2). See below for a chart of the Missouri QI's that are assessed during final clinical experience and the four areas that are tied to directly to instructional goal setting and the

Professional Competency Profile (dese.mo.gov, 2015):

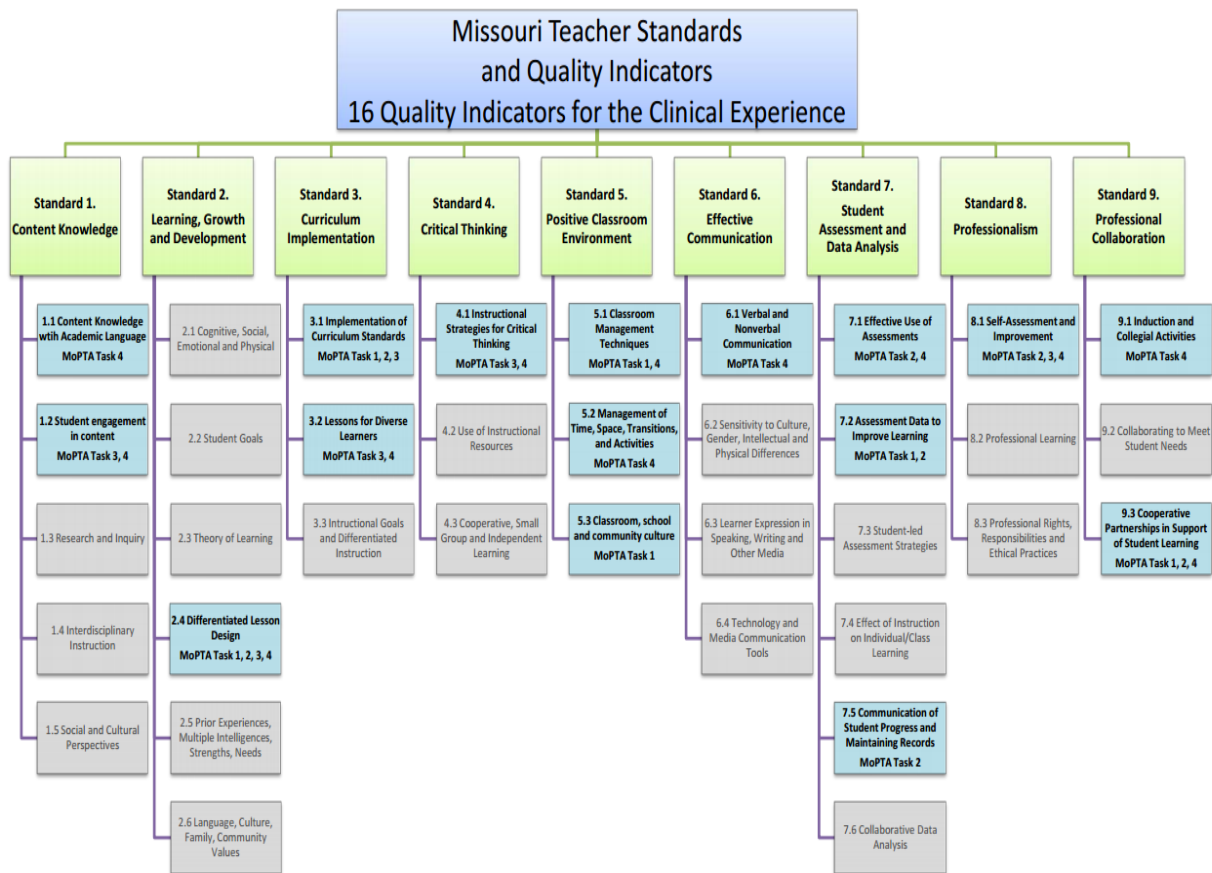


Figure 1: Missouri Quality Indicators

The writing and reflecting that the teacher candidates do in order to complete the Tasks is meant to lead students towards instructional goal-setting that is done within the Professional Competency Profile. The Professional Competency Profile (PCP) is a tool created by the Office of Educator Quality in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the state of Missouri. The Profile was created in conjunction with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). Both the Missouri Pre-

Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile are situated in a larger evaluation tool called the Missouri Educator Evaluation System. The Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES) is how beginning teachers are evaluated in the state of Missouri as is the case in most public schools to have a formalized evaluation system. Further, the Missouri Educator Evaluation System is also used for teacher candidates as the evaluation tool during their final clinical experience.

The Professional Competency Profile requires students to set goals in four different areas. These four areas are directly tied to the Missouri Quality Indicators as well as the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment. The alignment is noted in both places and is clearly evident to the teacher candidates. The four areas that teacher candidates set instructional goals for the PCP are: student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the state of Missouri give three reasons for developing the Professional Competency Profile to use with teacher candidates during their final clinical experience:

1. For principals and District HR people to use during the interview and hiring process
2. For teacher candidates to gain a better understanding of themselves as a new professional especially in regards to understanding one's strengths and weaknesses as well as areas of improvement
3. For establishing a document that can be used during the first year of teaching to help develop the teacher's 1<sup>st</sup> Professional Development plan

(<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/webinar/documents/PCP.pdf>, 2015)

Principals were interviewed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



about the concept of developing a Professional Competency Profile with teacher candidates during their final clinical experience. The response from principals was overwhelmingly positive that they thought this process would be beneficial to teacher candidates and would help principals during the hiring process. Heidi Mackey principal at Hogan Prep in Kansas City, Missouri states:

“If new teachers were to have a basic understanding of these four indicators, they would be able to begin their first year of service with solid knowledge of area they would need to improve upon. Writing their initial Professional Development Plan would no longer be a shot in the dark; but, they would have base line data that would allow them to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses – the true point of the growth plan.”

(<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/webinar/documents/PCP.pdf>, 2015)

Jenny Ulrich, a principal in the Lonedell school district, is a major supporter of the Professional Competency Profile and the instructional goal setting that will happen in the document:

4. “The ability to bridge a student teacher’s higher education/student teaching experience to their first job, better yet, to their first Professional Development Plan is a powerful tool. It is like a head start or a sneak peek that we have never had before. It creates a building block for growth right out of the gates. This is a Win-Win for all parties: Teachers will win. This gives solid grounding, connectedness, and focus to the first year teacher. The teacher will be coming in with a background that immediately connects and also provides a focal point for growth. It creates a huge advantage for them. Administrators and mentors will win. It will inform the

administrator and the mentor about the teacher's background in a more thorough way than we have ever had before. Students will win. The indicators chosen for the Professional Competency Profile are the most fundamental in the field. Concentration and reflection in these areas will pay huge dividends for the students of these first year teachers. I do LOVE the concept!"

(<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/webinar/documents/PCP.pdf>, 2015)

The Professional Competency Profile endeavors to engage teacher candidates in reflection-driven goal setting and action planning modeled after what Missouri certified teacher practice annually with the state's teacher evaluation system. The *MoPTA Candidate and Educator Handbook* (2015), states, "the PCP is a pre-service tool designed to help teacher candidates self-assess their performance as student teachers and set goals for their continued learning" (p. 4).

### **Need for Formal Measures for Teacher Candidates**

Teacher candidates are assessed and measured extensively during their Final Clinical Experience. On a larger scale, the nation, and specifically state departments of Education have been focusing on the need for assessment for their Education students. The Missouri Professional Competency Profile that will be used in this study is a part of a multiple Standardized tests and portfolio assessments such as the "Teacher Work Sample" (TWS) model have been popular assessment tools in the past (Zeichner & Wray, 2001). Rosselli, Girod, and Brodsky (2011) examine the genesis of the "TWS" and detail the process being developed at Western Oregon University in the late 1980's (p. 4) with seminars on the "TWS" being given in the late 1990's and a handbook published by AACTE in 1998 (p. 20). The "TWS" was a

portfolio capstone assessment to evaluate pre-service teachers' learning at the end of the university program and was part of the state certification process. The University where I work used the "Teacher Work Sample" model as the "exit assessment" from our program as students prepared for certification from 1999 until 2013 when the model changed. The genesis of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)'s newly released standards, which upped the ante in teacher education and "initiated a new era of accountability. States answered the new era of accountability by using the "TWS" to assess their students before awarding certificates for licensure.

This model of utilizing multiple measures within one assessment was part of a shift to move away from assessments that were created on a small scale at institutions to moving towards a standardized assessment with common expectations within a state. One example of a state taking the lead on a multiple measures performance exam is California which through legislation established a statewide assessment in the late 1990's called the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) which was developed by a team at Stanford University (p. 422).

Darling-Hammond (2006) assesses that this need for measurement has led to programs developing their own assessment tools for determining candidates' abilities. The assessment tools measured candidate performance in courses, student teaching, and the data was retained and used to determine retention in teaching as well as preservice teachers' preparedness (p. 121). Data being collected in multiple ways demonstrates the "multiple measures" approach. The MoPTA and the PCP are examples of multiple measure assessment tools.

In addition to universities wanting to assess and measure their own teacher candidates, the pressures of outside institutions wanting to assess and measure has increased and built over

the past decade. State departments of education want to assess teacher candidates before awarding teaching certificates, and accreditation agencies like CAEP want to ensure that teacher candidates as well as preservice students are being assessed at all levels of the program before graduation and certification. Legislators and the general public want assurance that the teachers “pass muster.” This is particularly shown in this study because teacher candidates have to meet a specific cut score on the MoPTA and teacher candidates submit their Professional Competency Profile to the State Department of Education.

## **Conclusion**

Professional identity and reflection are key elements in instructional goal-setting for teachers. The nationwide need for assessment of teacher candidates has led to the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile which assesses teacher candidate’s capabilities as they finish their final clinical experience and help the teacher candidate set up their first professional development goals. Students wanting to excel and create student impact are at the heart of students’ goal setting.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative case study, explores teacher candidates' instructional goal settings during their Final Clinical Experience. I will seek to determine what teacher candidates' instructional practice goals are during the onset of their Final Clinical Experience; what thoughts they have about their goals as they go through their Final Clinical Experience, and what influenced the teacher candidates' thoughts about or changes in their goals. My study will follow a small group of teacher candidates during their Final Clinical Experience, and will seek to address the following research questions:

1. What are the teacher candidate's initial goals and how do candidates reflect on their reasons for selecting these goals?
2. What are the teacher candidate's perceptions of their instructional goals as they reflect on their Final Clinical Experience?

I have selected this topic because I currently am the professor of record for all students' Final clinical experience hours at the University where I teach. I am also their Seminar teacher which is a class the teacher candidates take concurrently with their Final Clinical Experience hours. I am hopeful by completing this study that I will be able to better understand my students' goal-setting processes and how to help them in the future.

### **General Design of Study**

The general design of my study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. The study was based upon an emergent design model utilizing: completed Missouri Professional Competency Profiles and mid- and post-Final Clinical Experiences first-person interviews that illuminated the students' instructional goal setting.

## **Study population and sample selection**

The study population that I sought for this study was students in their final semester of the Teacher Education Preparatory Program. This semester is called the Final Clinical Experience. The study population came from a small, private University in the Midwestern area of the United States. I began with a cohort of all of the students in that semester who were completing their Final Clinical Experience. From that cohort, I sought three students whom I worked with over the course of an academic semester. I chose three undergraduate students from the cohort. I took into consideration the type of school where they were placed as well: suburban or urban. I sought students for each type of school environment to take in contextual factors in all settings. Students were at the end of the program. To get into this particular School of Education, students must have a 3.0 GPA and have completed all core curricular requirements with a grade of “C” or better. Students completed their final fourteen hours of enrollment before they received their diploma and were eligible to apply for their teaching certificate/license. The University that provided the sample had a mixture of both traditional undergraduate students and graduate certification students. The graduate certification students already have a Baccalaureate degree from another institution, and they added the education courses to that degree in order to be fully certified. I sought mixture of undergraduate students. The three case study participants who were selected to take part in this study were all secondary Language Arts teacher candidates. I chose these students from the same content area for comparative analysis.

## **Data collection instruments**

Data came from four sources: pre- and post-Final clinical experience completed Missouri Professional Competency Profiles and mid- and post-Final clinical experience first-person interviews that illuminated the students' instructional goal setting.

*Missouri Professional Competency Profile* (see Appendix A)—the study participants (teacher candidates) completed the Missouri Professional Competency Profile (see Appendix A) at the beginning of their Final Clinical Experience. The teacher candidates set goals in four areas: engagement, differentiation, classroom management, and assessment. The document analysis from the completed Missouri Professional Competency Profiles answered the first research question: What are the teacher candidate's initial goals for Final Clinical Experience?

*Clinical Experience interviews*—I interviewed each of the study participants at the mid-point in their Final clinical experience and the end of the Final Clinical Experience. (see Appendix B for the interview protocol) I asked questions about how well prepared they felt in pedagogy and content as well as questions about engagement, differentiation, classroom management, and assessment. I asked the participants to reflect on what pieces felt were missing that they needed to work on before they are employed full –time. The mid-Final clinical experience Interview answered the first research question: What are the teacher candidate's initial goals and how do candidates reflect on their reasons for selecting these goals? The post-interview answered the second research question: What are the teacher candidate's perceptions of their instructional goals as they reflect on their Final Clinical Experience?

## **Data collection procedures**

The teacher candidates who were selected to be part of the study completed the Missouri Professional Competency Profile. The responses were written answers. Students completed the Profile via the Online Management software, Canvas. Students used the same document template to create both the pre- and post-Final clinical experience Professional Competency Profile. The teacher candidates completed the pre-Final clinical experience Missouri Professional Competency Profile in January 2016, and the teacher candidates completed the post-Final clinical experience Missouri Professional Competency Profile in May 2016 (see Appendix A). The teacher candidates were in their classroom setting for approximately eight days before writing their instructional goals. The teacher candidates had a fifteen-minute mini-lesson in the classroom during the Seminar class about goal setting. The teacher candidates were instructed to write their goals in the format “the teacher candidate will...”

Both the mid- and post-Final clinical experience interviews were done on campus or at another convenient location for the teacher candidate. Interviews were conducted between the 30-35 day mark in their Final clinical experience for the mid-Final clinical experience interview. The post-Final clinical experience interview was done within one month after the conclusion of the Final Clinical Experience. I took an audio recording of the interview, and I used my preselected questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix B).

## **Analysis procedures**

Analysis was guided by the teacher candidates’ Pre- and post-Final clinical experience Missouri Professional Competency Profiles and by their Mid- and post-Final clinical experience interviews. I analyzed the data using two different analysis methods. First, I utilized coding and themes (Merriam, 2009); (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to seek themes. Second, I used document



analysis (Weber, 1985) to seek themes as I analyzed the Professional Competency Profiles, and the interviews. I analyzed the documents and interviews by participant and then sought connections and themes amongst the participants including examining differences/similarities between undergraduate students and graduate certification students. I sought thematic words as I read each document and the text of each interview.

The table below is a visual representation of the two research questions, with the corresponding data collection method and data analysis method:

Research Question	Data collection	Data analysis
1. What are the teacher candidate's initial goals and how do candidates reflect on their reasons for selecting these goals?	Documents – Completed Missouri's Professional Competency Profile  (See Appendix A)  Interviews with 3 students halfway through the Final Clinical Experience.  Audiotape  (See Appendix B)	Content analysis—document analysis  R.P. Weber  Constant comparative analysis-thematic coding  A. Strauss
2. What are the teacher candidate's perceptions	Interviews with same 3 students at completion of the	Constant comparative analysis-thematic coding

of their instructional goals as they reflect on their Final Clinical Experience?	Final Clinical Experience. Audiotape (See Appendix B)	A. Strauss
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I combined coding/thematic analysis and document analysis to gain an overall picture of the teacher candidates' instructional goal-setting skills during their Final Clinical Experience. I analyzed by participant while still seeking overarching themes across participants.

Trustworthiness was held in utmost consideration while doing this study. Data was collected from multiple sources and analyzed in different ways; thus, creating data triangulation. For the interviews, I recorded the interviews and conducted member checks for accuracy. I summarized the interview and shared the summary with the study participant. Follow-up questions will be in the realm of possibility if clarification is necessary after coding and the beginning data analysis. This study has applicable transferability to all teacher education preparatory programs. It is transferrable to other institutions in Missouri as they are all required by DESE to use the Professional Competency Profile.

### **Conclusions and Significance**

This study was needed because setting goals helps teacher candidates to become more effective teachers. Understanding how teacher candidates work toward and/or reflect on their goals is important. Understanding teacher candidates' thinking may allow university educator

preparation programs, state departments of education, and school districts to more effectively prepare teacher candidates as they prepare to join the educator work force.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

Teacher candidates have a final opportunity to cultivate their pedagogical skills and content knowledge, with support from a university supervisor and cooperating teacher, during their final clinical experience. For this experience, teacher candidates are placed in local schools for twelve-weeks, as a culmination to their coursework, to allow them to be the lead teacher in a classroom and prepare them for their first classroom teaching job. Although teacher candidates are given solo teaching time during the final clinical experience, they are under the supervision of both a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor.

The traditional model of the twelve-week final clinical experience, often referred to as the “triad” (Slick, 1997), consists of the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor working together. Teacher candidates are enrolled in a full course load at the university for their final clinical experience semester. The teacher candidates participating in the current study were placed in different schools across a metro area and with different cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers were chosen by the school district to work with, support, and evaluate a teacher candidate. Cooperating teachers are teachers who have their Master’s degree in education or their field, and have been teaching for at least five years. Additionally, each teacher candidate worked with and was evaluated by a university supervisor. The university supervisors, all School of Education faculty members except for one who is an adjunct supervisor, observed their teacher candidate teach, at least four times, and then conferenced with the teacher candidate and the cooperating teacher. The university supervisor also assigned the grade that the teacher candidate received for the final clinical experience.

In addition to the final clinical experience, teacher candidates also took a two credit hour course called Seminar. Seminar is a course where teacher candidates collaborate with their peers who are also completing final clinical experience, work on professional documents such as the resume and cover letter, learn more about the job search and contracts, practice interview skills, and learn about school safety. Teacher candidates also complete the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile during this semester, and the teacher candidates receive instruction about those two requirements as part of the Seminar course.

The final clinical experience is not only critical for teacher candidates for their personal growth but because they must complete and pass the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment, which is required for teacher certification. This aligns with a national movement (Darling-Hammond, 2010) towards formally assessing teacher candidates prior to being awarded their certification. These assessments focus on pedagogical skills, content knowledge, reflective skills, and professional dispositions (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). Succeeding in all these areas puts considerable pressure on the teacher candidates, in addition to the already large work-load during their final semester. One of the case study participants, Carrie, described this overwhelming feeling stating, “I think one of the most challenging things was time management. Especially having this state test in conjunction with the final clinical experience. Doing it all at the same time was a challenge. Especially Task 1 being due right at the start.”

## **Findings**

As I analyzed data collected throughout this case study, it became clear that teacher candidates find all four of these areas to be areas that they need to grow and improve in. The

main findings are: teacher candidates believe that the four instructional areas are important for becoming a skilled teacher; teacher candidates found the four instructional areas difficult to implement, particularly differentiation; and, teacher candidates did not alter their instructional goals and will continue to address them during their first year of teaching. These three main findings are explored more next. The teacher candidate interviews highlighted that all four areas are challenging for teacher candidates. None of the case study participants felt that they did not need to set an instructional goal in one or more of the four areas. Through reflection and classroom experience it was clear to the teacher candidates how critical these four instructional areas are in the classroom. Research points to differentiation being a challenging skill for pre-service teachers and veteran teachers alike (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). A unifying theme across the candidates in the case study is that differentiation is particularly challenging and that teacher candidates feel they need considerable improvement in this area as well as more resources and knowledge in how to differentiate effectively and what that means for their classroom and students.

I additionally found that teacher candidates largely didn't alter their goals from setting them at the beginning of their twelve-week experience nor "re-setting" or reexamining their goals at the end of their final clinical experience. I will explore this more in my further analysis, but all three of the case study participants largely kept the same goals that they set at the beginning of the experience, and say that they will continue to need to work on the same goals and areas of weakness next academic year in their first professional year of teaching.

### **Heather's story**

Heather, a 23-year-old teacher candidate majoring in Secondary Language Arts, completed her final clinical experience at a private, parochial school serving approximately nine

hundred students. She had to postpone her final clinical experience semester once because she had not passed a mathematics requirement that she needed in order to move forward in her coursework. She was placed at the private school, and worked with a twenty-eight-year-old cooperating teacher who has been teaching at this school for the past five years. Her cooperating teacher did not have her own classroom and traveled each hour to different classrooms. Although her cooperating teacher did not have a classroom, she did have a desk in an English office share by other teachers and Heather was given a small space to work in the English office, too. During her experience, Heather's taught Honors Freshmen English and Honors Junior English.

Two weeks into her clinical experience, Heather met with me and other Seminar classmates for the first time. At this class meeting, I worked with all of the teacher candidates and discussed the Professional Competency Profile and what would be expected of the students in setting instructional goals in the four areas. I encouraged teacher candidates to use the format, "the teacher candidate will..." and, as a class we spent about fifteen to twenty minutes individually brainstorming goals for the four focus areas: student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction. In addition to setting a goal, the teacher candidates were asked to consider actions and strategies that would help the teacher candidate achieve the goal, resources and support that the teacher candidate would need to achieve the goal, and then later the teacher candidate can provide results on their progress towards their goal. This process is mirrored in the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES) when teachers work in a school for their first time in Missouri.

Heather submitted her initial copy of her Professional Competency Profile, and these are the four goals that she set for her experience:

1. Student Engagement—Engage all students while taking notes—instead of some not paying attention or hoping to look at notes online later.
2. Differentiated Lesson Design—Incorporate differentiation more often in order to meet students' individual needs.
3. Classroom management—Get the few disengaged students to re-engage so they are not distracting to the rest of the class—work on wait time for students' attention.
4. Using Assessment Data to Improve Instruction—Find more ways to integrate formative assessments into my self-reflection so I can better teach students to their needs.

When I asked Heather about how she chose her goals, she highlighted the idea that she used self-reflection to determine where she needed improvement the most. She said she tried to think of specific experiences she's had even going back to prior field-work with Practicum, General Methods and Specialized Methods and started thinking "how could I have made this better?" She brainstormed in the four categories different ideas before landing on her four goals.

Heather did not alter her four goals when completing her Professional Competency Profile at the end of her twelve-week Final Clinical Experience.

I gathered additional information about Heather's instructional goals, as well as examples from her teaching from other interviews. Also, I gathered information from her



“actions/strategies and resources and support” sections of her Professional Competency Profile.

These data helped shape my understanding of Heather’s beliefs and actions.

**Student engagement.** For the instructional goal related to student engagement, Heather chose to focus on note taking. She did so because her cooperating teacher also focused on helping students take notes during PowerPoint presentations and Heather wanted to not only improve their note taking but also help students pay attention during presentations. One way Heather supported students was by modifying the Google classroom notes repository system. That is, rather than actively listening and taking notes during presentation, students simply waited until the teacher posted notes in the Google classroom notes repository. In the following excerpt, Heather talks about student engagement.

Ok, something that we’ve talked about before is having all of the students be engaged while we’re taking notes. I got better with this as I went through the weeks of final clinical. There were a few times when I had them take notes off a presentation because that can be boring. But, at first I was like here are what we need to take notes on. Then, I told them that it would be up later to view. I think that made them not want to pay as much attention. So, I kind of worked to get it so they have to pay attention. For example, not putting the notes online until you’re studying for the test or something like that. And, I kind of put the responsibility in their hands so that they have to manage that on their own.

**Differentiated lessons.** Heather’s second goal focused on differentiated lesson design. Heather wanted to be able to plan lessons that included time to speak with students individually. She included the idea of “mini lessons” on her Professional Competency Profile; she especially

thought that would be an effective method to use when students were working on writing and rhetoric in the classroom. Heather thought that the mini lesson approach would give her more time to discuss specific parts of papers like introductions and transitions and that she would have time to explain it more deeply so that students would gain a better understanding. Below Heather describes how she approached differentiation:

I kind of got to talk to the focus students on their own to see how I could help them improve. When I did that I started with a baseline, which I guess this talks about using data too. I started a little bit with my very first day there they did a little writing assignment so that I could gauge where they're at and see where they need to improve. So, when I went about looking at the focus students later on, specifically I think it was with a big writing assignment, I would talk to them individually, and I would talk to them and stop by and have them show me their work. Like, "Hey, I'm going to give you feedback even if you don't feel like you want to ask for it." So, that was kind of nice because I feel like they got more attention from me in every class. So, it wasn't just "hey go write this paper and try to figure that out alone." Other than that, using group work, so that the students who don't always quite get things, on their first try or whatever and use other people to help them get other ideas.

**Classroom management.** Heather's third goal focused on classroom management. She set a two-part goal for classroom management that addressed both disengaged students and wait time for students. She wanted to work to craft lesson plans that require every student to be engaged or involved and guided note taking was one strategy that she put on her Professional Competency Profile. She also highlighted the fact that she wanted to establish procedures at the

start of the school year that are conducive to student learning and engagement. Heather did her Final Clinical Experience in the spring semester and teacher candidates often feel like they should maintain the status quo for the remainder of the school year. Heather describes her challenge in not wanting to drastically go against what her cooperating teacher had done the previous semester and wanting to implement her own plan. However, Heather discussed establishing expectations about engagement and on-task behaviors in her Classroom Rules and Policies document.

Heather: In a couple of my classes I had, I mean they really are all good students, because I kind of lucked out where I was at, but in the two classes where I had students who would get disengaged, or it would almost seem like they wanted attention or something like that. They'd try to get me off task. There were a lot of times where I would get the group started going on whatever their goal was for the day, and then I'd go back and talk to that student separately like, "oh hey, what can I do to get you to pay more attention, or how can I help you so that you're not distracted during class?" That tended to work for a week or two until they forgot that I told them to pay attention. But, a lot of that overall was good because the class listened to me. They knew I wanted to know about them, and that I respected them. They gave me the same respect. There were some times where I had to redirect.

**Assessment.** Heather's fourth goal focused on finding more ways to use formative assessments to improve classroom instruction. Exit tickets or competency checks where students demonstrated their knowledge gained in that day's lesson were two methods Heather incorporate into her classroom for this purpose. For example, after reading students' responses on the exit

tickets, Heather was able to think about and decide what she should do next instructionally. By asking herself, “now what?” help Heather to consider ways of improving instruction that would lead to student learning. In our interview she talked about exit tickets and also about writing assignments in the classroom.

I use a lot of formative assessments to show students where they're at. Especially with writing assignments here and there and exit tickets looking at where we need to touch on things more. So, I paid attention to that throughout before a test. Before a summative assessment or anything like that so I knew where to pinpoint the information again. Just like I used that baseline writing assignment to see where they were struggling. If it was grammar, or main ideas, or topic sentences or something like that. I would incorporate a mini-lesson on how to better form a thesis statement or a topic sentence so that it wasn't me trying to reteach the whole crafting of a paper but rather kind of little things here and there so they might pay attention to things as they go along.

**Summary.** At the beginning of her final clinical experience, Heather believed that she had enough self-awareness to set solid instructional goals. She believed her self-awareness stemmed from her practicum, and general and specialized methods courses. Consequently, Heather believed she was able to identify the areas of professional growth she should address during her final clinical experience. However, she also realized that her classroom management style or approach might need to be different once hired for her first professional teaching job. That is, since her final clinical experience was in a private, parochial school Heather knew that classroom management was relatively easy because students were well behaved and she had few problem students. Heather was able to use her Differentiation goal and her Using Assessment Data goal to improve instruction. Specifically, Heather gathered and used baseline data and data

from formative assessments to gauge students' knowledge and modify her instruction. Further, by conferencing with students, Heather was able to provide feedback that supported student learning. Finally, Heather pointed out that she made her goals somewhat open-ended and general on purpose and further clarified her ideas for each instructional goal within her action/strategy and resources and support sections of her Professional Competency Profile. She clarified by pointing out the strategies and resources she would need to access.

### **Jason's story**

Jason, a twenty-five-year-old teacher candidate majoring in Secondary Language Arts, completed his final clinical experience at a large, suburban, public school of approximately one thousand eight hundred students. He was placed with a sixty-three-year-old cooperating teacher with over forty years teaching experience. Jason's cooperating teacher taught at this school for a very long time and she had her own classroom. Jason was given a desk in the classroom for his workspace. Jason taught English 9, English 9H, ELL, and Writer's Workshop which was a creative writing elective course.

Two weeks into his final clinical experience, Jason met with me and other Seminar classmates for the first time. Like Heather, I worked with all of the teacher candidates and discussed the Professional Competency Profile and what would be expected of the students in setting goals in the four areas.

Jason submitted his initial Professional Competency Profile with following four goals:

1. Student Engagement—Every student will be active and engaged in the day's lessons.
2. Differentiated Lesson Design—Every student will receive properly differentiated instruction that suits his or her own needs.

3. Classroom management—The classroom will be orderly, respectful, non-disruptive, inviting, and intellectually stimulating.
4. Using Assessment Data to Improve Instruction—My pre-assessment data will reveal to me the current ability and knowledge level of my students, and thus inform my subsequent instruction. If, after a post-assessment, insufficient growth has taken place, further instruction in the neglected areas will take place.

At the end of his twelve-week Final Clinical Experience, Jason kept these his four goals for his final Professional Competency Profile. However, during interviews, Jason discussed his experience in the classroom and expanded on his instructional goal-setting. I also gathered information about his instructional goals from his “actions/strategies and resources and support” sections of his Professional Competency Profile.

**Student engagement.** For his instructional goal for student engagement, Jason chose to focus on active learning because he believed there were varying levels of engagement in the different courses he was assigned to teach during his final clinical experience. Jason believed the honors students were highly engaged, the students of average ability were mixed in their engagement, and the writer’s workshop students were frequently off task and surfing the Internet unsupervised. He planned to make more interesting lessons to hold students’ attention and to expect them to be more accountable for their actions. In the following excerpt, Jason talked about students’ varying levels of engagement.

In the honors classes [engagement] was very high, and in the regular classes it was mixed. Writer’s workshop was also very mixed. The honors kids wanted to be there, they were excited [to learn]. They were excited about the material, and they wanted to get something out of it. The regular kids were there because they had to be there [but]

everyone would be engaged most of the time. In writer's workshop, I felt like a lot of the students lost their way because the prompts we used for writing were dry and not engaging. What they were writing every day was on their laptops, so they had free reign on their laptops the whole time. They were on the internet for the whole class. They surfed the internet the whole time.

**Differentiated lessons.** Jason's second goal focused on differentiated lesson design. Jason highlighted following all of the students' Individual Education Plans (IEP's), and being able to recognize struggling students in the classroom and know how to best address their struggles with the appropriate accommodations. He said that in his assigned classes there were upwards of ten students with IEP's to support. He wasn't aware of all of the details of the IEP's, but had a briefing session with the special education co-teacher to become aware of the students' needs. He said this was a challenging area because he knew he was bound by law to follow the IEP, but he didn't have access to all of the paperwork. He said the IEP information and required modifications were hard to track, and is an area that needs improvement. Below, Jason discusses differentiation with me

Natalie: Tell me about differentiation. How did you approach differentiation and working with focus students?

Jason: I would say I guess it was okay. I didn't really do a lot for them. I said I was going to give them extra time, and I said I was going to explain things if they didn't understand. I think I said I would give them—I didn't really have a baseline data to compare with them. I didn't really have a lesson where I could compare with them for differentiation. I don't know...

Natalie: Tell me more about the focus students specifically.

Jason: One of the focus students just wasn't going to take any advantage of anything that was offered. One of them really didn't need anything—she was a high-achieving focus student. I didn't want to just give her extra work. The other one couldn't care less about his grades. Wasn't invested in the class.

Jason spoke of apathy, disinterest, and attendance problems in the students as a recurring theme across his course preps. He said that was something he wasn't really expecting going into his experience and was something that he would need to consider with his first job depending on the school where he's hired. Jason pointed out that some of the courses were electives and some were required but that didn't really seem to change students' attitudes to the content. Jason believed the students in the electives were more likely to be disengaged because they didn't need the course to graduate, and the students in the required courses were disengaged because they felt removed from the content and didn't like all of the writing they were required to do.

**Classroom management.** Jason's third goal focused on classroom management. He focused on the keywords of "orderly," "respectful," "non-disruptive," "inviting," and "intellectually stimulating" in his goal. He expanded on these words in his Professional Competency Profile saying that he plans to give students clear procedures and expectations from the outset. He plans to inform them of the consequences for failing to follow these expectations and follow through with necessary consequences accordingly. He had trouble coming in for the spring semester and changing the protocol of what was expected for classroom management. He didn't feel like he could totally change everything that the students were used to. This is discussed further in our interview:

Natalie: Tell me about classroom management.



Jason: I probably need to have a tighter handle on the management. I felt like some of the classes were out of control, but I felt like it was hard to make it stricter at this point in the year. I didn't want to come in with a teacher that was a little loser, and then come in as a big hard ass. That clearly wouldn't work.

Jason highlighted that his classroom management goal and plan for his first classroom would need to reflect what he spoke about for students' engagement as well. The students should not be allowed free reign on their laptops, and there needs to be a clear technology policy not only for laptops but also for cell phones. He felt that both student engagement and classroom management were negatively impacted by not having clear expectations for either of these—the laptops or the cell phones because virtually every student had a cell phone and every student did have a laptop because of a District technology initiative. He also pointed out that one-to-one initiatives also add elements to think about in the classroom such as: what do it if you've created a lesson for the laptops and one student forgot his/her laptop; what to do about power cords and charging and making sure students had charged laptops; and finally what are the firewalls the District laptops had in place to monitor inappropriate web content.

**Assessment.** Jason's fourth goal focused on using assessment data to improve instruction. His instructional goal for this area focused on using pre-assessment data to determine which areas represent the greatest deficiencies in my students' understanding, then be able to tailor and plan instruction to emphasize learning in these particular areas. He says that he will then do the same with his post-assessment data. He states that his assessment data will be his greatest resource in how to move forward with instruction. Pacing will be an important consideration in incorporating pre-assessments, assessments, and then analyzing post-assessment data. Jason had some difficulties navigating pacing with his cooperating teacher. Jason felt that

he always had to be moving forward and sticking with the schedule his cooperating teacher set forth. He didn't feel like he could go back to ideas or concepts that the students may have missed. This is discussed further in our interview:

Natalie: Tell me about assessment in your final clinical experience.

Jason: I think pre-assessment data is important because obviously I need to know what level the kids are when they're starting out. I need to know whether they need to do redundant work. I don't want to start with work that's way above their heads.... I used constant questioning to gauge the students' understanding. Many of my classes were pretty small, so I was really able to question each student and informally track their knowledge on that day's subject matter. Also, some of my classes had attendance problems.

Natalie: What about summative assessments?

Jason: As far as summative assessments, first I gave them a baseline assessment and then I gave them the exact one later. It was over argumentation like fact vs. opinion and Logos/ethos/pathos and persuasive techniques.

**Summary.** Jason felt that he was able to put the pieces together in the classroom during his final clinical experience, and even though he had a challenging relationship with his cooperating teacher at times which is described later in this chapter, he still felt that he got the opportunity to put his knowledge from his university classes to work and complete the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment effectively.

### **Carrie's story**

Carrie is a twenty-three-year-old undergraduate case study participant who completed her final clinical experience at a large, suburban, public school of approximately two thousand students. Carrie is becoming certified in Secondary Language Arts. She was placed at the public school, and worked with a thirty-six-year-old cooperating teacher who has been teaching for the past twelve years. Carrie's placement had several different course preps; she taught English 10H, English 10, and English 12. Carrie's cooperating teacher has been teaching for twelve years, but has only been at this school for the past two years. She travels to different classrooms throughout the school day. Carrie did not have a desk where she could store her school materials.

Two weeks into her final clinical experience, Carrie met with me and her other Seminar classmates for the first time. I worked with all of the teacher candidates and discussed the Professional Competency Profile and what would be expected of the students in setting goals in the four areas.

Carrie submitted her initial copy of her Professional Competency Profile, with the four goals that she set for her experience:

1. Student Engagement—Promote increased student discussion, completion of assignments, and engagement in classroom activities.
2. Differentiated Lesson Design—Develop and implement teaching techniques and strategies that meet a variety of learning needs. Provide for individual differences among students by providing and developing meaningful enrichment activities.
3. Classroom management—Implement a behavior management plan that promotes self-discipline and maintains appropriate student behaviors.

4. Using Assessment Data to Improve Instruction—Use data from assessments to make informed decisions about student learning. Analyze results from multiple assessment types (formative, summative, and other measures) to inform instruction and determine which strategies, materials, and resources will improve student achievement.

Carrie did not alter three of her four instructional goals for her final copy of her Professional Competency Profile that she completed at the end of her twelve-week Final Clinical Experience. She did chose to modify her classroom management goal in her final submission. Her classroom management goal was modified to include the words “student-created” after “implement” to highlight that she wants her classroom management plan to be co-created with her students. This is discussed further later in this section.

Carrie expanded on her instructional goal-setting and her life in the classroom in our interview sessions that were held. I also gathered additional information about her instructional goals from her “actions/strategies and resources and support” sections of her Professional Competency Profile.

**Student engagement.** Carries describes her instructional goal for student engagement and chose to focus on creating highly engaging learning activities as part of her lesson plans to work to promote deeper thinking and more reflective student learning. She has specific resources in mind such as the book, *The Highly Engaged Classroom* that she plans to use to help her reach this goal. As an aspect of her lesson planning, she wants to think of activities that will have all of the students participating as she continued to see the same students who were disengaged day after day in her classes.

Natalie: Tell me about student engagement in your classroom. Tell me about your engagement goal.

Carrie: I think a lot of times in the classroom, and we talked about this in other coursework here, but you know you don't really realize how it will be until you get there.

It is the same students who talk all the time that answer the questions. It's the same students who are completely disengaged all the time. They don't want to be there. So, my goal is to have a classroom environment where it is enjoyable, and they want to participate. I really want an ideal world; I want everyone to be participating. So, I think that was really important to me.

Carrie also discussed the idea that the classroom wasn't her's alone. Since she was a teacher candidate completing her final clinical experience, she was coming into a classroom that had been already been set up by her cooperating teacher for a whole semester. For example, her cooperating teacher didn't have a cell phone policy in place which directly influenced student engagement; Carrie saw many of the students on their cell phones multiple times per class period. She notes that it's hard to really change things or make major drastic revisions:

Natalie: Did you feel like being a teacher candidate affected you being able to create your own engagement expectations?

Carrie: I will say that I didn't particularly set expectations the way I want to in the future. Cell phones are a huge distraction. It keeps students from being engaged because they're on their phones. My cooperating teacher did not have a cell phone policy. She just kind of allowed whatever. That definitely made it challenging because as I was

coming into the classroom, it was something that I made a note of. I've been talking to other teachers about what their policies are and kind of how they implement the policy.

Natalie: Yes, I am kind of surprised by that. Oftentimes, there's a school-wide policy.

Carrie: That made it challenging because when I took over the class, it's kind of hard for a student teacher to be like, "these are my rules now, and you need to follow them. That doesn't really work!"

Natalie: Yes, I've definitely heard that before.

**Differentiated Lessons.** Carrie's second instructional goal focused on differentiated lesson design. Carrie wanted to be able to give student inventories to better understand how each student prefers to learn and in what ways they learn best. She noted that since her final clinical experience time went by so quickly, she really didn't get to digest or put to use the information she gathered from the student interest inventory that she did give. She feels that she would be able to better address the students' learning needs if she delved into the student interest inventory and learning styles more. Carrie shared in an interview how she approached working with a para in her classroom to help address students' needs and then further how she worked with a student who has spina bifida and how she incorporated technology more for this student to help meet her learning needs in the classroom:

Natalie: How did you approach differentiation and working with focus students?

Carrie: I had varying student needs in my classes, and I had a para in one of my classes. With her [the para], I worked on creating different assignments and modifying different assignments and goals. I also had a student who has spina bifida, and so her motor skills were somewhat challenged, and so we worked on creating her lessons that could be done

all on the computer. She liked to type because it was hard for her to write out answers in her handwriting. Those are some of the things that I did for those students.

**Classroom management.** Carrie's third goal focused on classroom management. Her initial goal was phrased as "Implement a behavior management plan that promotes self-discipline and maintains appropriate student behaviors." She revised her goal at the end of her experience to include the phrase "student created" after the word "implement" to state, "Implement a student created behavior management plan that promotes self-discipline and maintains appropriate student behaviors." Through her discussions with her university supervisor, which are discussed later in this chapter, Carrie decided that her approach to behavior management needed to include the students more for it to be successful. She states this is why she altered her goal from its original form. She also states that she will study behavior theorists such as William Glasser to develop and learn strategies to implement in the classroom. Carrie also discussed Harry Wong's book, *First Days of School*. She wanted to re-read that text during the summer in advance of her teaching job for the fall that she is working to obtain. She remembered liking reading that text the first time she read it, and wanted to review the ideas and concepts prior to teaching on her own her first year.

Natalie: Tell me about classroom management. Tell me about your classroom management goal.

Carrie: So, I talked about that I wanted my plan to be one that promotes self-discipline and promotes good behaviors. My hope it that, and we've talked about this in one of my other classes I think it was Behavior Management. One of the theories is that I can engage students at the beginning of the year in the engagement plan. I'll have rules, but I

will have everyone be involved in setting the rules. Self-respect will be promoted and this setting of the rules together will help promote that self-respect. And also make them more self-aware and promote good behavior. I know they're only teenagers, but it's different than little kids. I'd like for them to try to feel ownership and responsibility.

Natalie: I agree; I think that students like the "buy in" when they help create the plan like you're describing.

**Assessment.** Carrie's fourth goal focused on using assessment data to improve instruction. Her instructional goal for this area focused on analyzing the results of different types of assessment including formative, summative, and other measures to decide how those results could be interpreted to improve student achievement. She states that collecting a variety of student data that doesn't focus only on formal assessment results will be one of her strategies for achieving this instructional goal. Attendance, behavior, and performance in the classroom would all be tracked to aid in her goal. She states that using this data in conjunction with work samples and assessment grades will help her address learning difficulties and academic needs and then make appropriate adjustments to her instruction in order to meet these students' individual needs. Taking workshops, attending conferences, and working with colleagues were all discussed as support towards meeting this instructional goal. She highlighted that technology as a tool could aid her in her analysis of this data:

Natalie: Tell me about how you approached assessment in your classroom. Tell me about your assessment goal.

Carrie: I was a big fan of doing pretests. Before we did a unit, and I gave students a pretest, and then I could judge students' knowledge on the concepts whether they had no



knowledge or some knowledge. I also tried to use a lot of whole class activities and individual activities so I could measure where students were. As far as their understanding of things. Every time before we had a quiz or a test we would always do a Kahoot game or something so I could see if there were certain topics or concepts that they were struggling with.

Natalie: Would you see the results individually in the Kahoot? Who was missing what?

Carrie: Yes, I could see that. It was also nice for whole class. You know if a lot of students missed an item, that would be obvious.

**Summary.** In our interviews and in Seminar class, Carrie struck me as the most self-confident teacher candidate of the three case study participants presented as part of this study. She was able to see the “big picture” of how a classroom works including all of what a teacher does in a day, and she was constantly thinking about what she planned to change or revise when she her own classroom. She anchored these ideas in reflection and was guided by the instructional goal setting process and the four instructional goal areas. Carrie seemed better equipped to recognize a problem in the classroom, develop a possible solution, and then implement the solution in the classroom. She was also more willing to try solutions, and if one didn’t work, try another solution.

### **Cooperating teachers and University Supervisors and Instructional Goals**

The teacher candidates had other influences, cooperating teachers and university supervisors, on their instructional practices in the classroom that helped shape their instructional goal-setting. Slick (1997) describes the “triad”—the teacher candidate, the university supervisor, and the cooperating teacher. These three individuals that comprise the triad are explored in this

section, and I share more data from my case studies. As previously stated, neither Heather nor Jason chose to alter their Instructional goals from their initial draft to their final draft completed at the conclusion of their final clinical experience. Carrie did alter her classroom management goal at the suggestion and guidance from her cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The case study participants expanded on their relationships with their cooperating teachers and university supervisors and how they impacted their final clinical experience and their instructional goal setting. Their cooperating teachers and university supervisors helped guide the case study participants on important instructional goal setting topics such as the actions and strategies and resources and support that the teacher candidates will need going forward in their teaching career to be successful. This is a new process for the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors. This is discussed further in chapter five, as well. The goals set during this study were broad. With additional training and coursework, more focused goals (e.g. specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) could be set by the teacher candidate.

Heather had a positive relationship with her cooperating teacher and felt that her cooperating teacher gave her feedback that helped guide her self-reflection. She felt supported by her cooperating teacher, and that her cooperating teacher was really aiming to help her improve her instruction and planning as she went through her experience. She discussed her relationship with her cooperating teacher and how her feedback aided in her self-reflection in her interview:

Heather: She was really good, my cooperating teacher, was really good about giving me feedback especially at the beginning she would have sit through one or two of the classes to kind of take notes and look for things to discuss with me. She would give me notes about how to do it better if I was going to do it again in the future, or change it to this, so

that was really helpful. It made me think about the things that are really important because I was really focused on just getting through my first couple of weeks of my experience...so I loved that I got feedback while I was teaching the sophomores.

Heather also felt she gained important feedback about her instruction from her university supervisor and the lesson reflections she was required to complete after her university supervisor came to see her in the classroom. Her supervisor pointed out elements for Heather to think about that Heather wasn't thinking about on her own.

Heather: Probably that there were some things that I could improve on that I may not have noticed on my own or even in self-reflection would I have noticed that I need to work on this or being able to talk and go through the highs and lows of that lesson or whatever helped me to think about what I need to incorporate in future lessons.

Heather realized the importance of self-reflection in relation to her instructional goal-setting in the classroom. She noted that being "forced" to do a reflection after a specific lesson made her examine specific ideas like how many students weren't engaged, and how she should approach differentiation and formative assessment in the classroom. Heather highlighted the idea that even though she doesn't know exactly what the future holds for her in the classroom, she knows that being reflective will be important to her success. Heather said the following when asked about reflections on her instruction:

Heather: It made me sit down and think about things like "who was being disengaged?" or "who did I notice didn't quite get the point of it?" or something like that, so it made me realize in the future that that is something that I will need to do. Maybe not sit down and write a paper exactly, but at least go back through to look at the highs and lows of

certain lessons to see. I'll just be starting my first couple of years of teaching, and I have no idea what books, or what I'll be teaching, so definitely focusing on being a reflective person so I can always be improving.

Heather said that for setting her goals she felt that she had enough self-knowledge about her strengths and weaknesses that she knew what to say for the four areas. She remembered back to her earlier field work in Practicum, General Methods, and Specialized Methods which she also did at her same school site to help her shape her instructional goals. She states that her cooperating teacher and her university supervisor echoed the same ideas in their conferences and communications.

Jason had a relationship with his cooperating teacher that was in some ways positive and in other ways negative. He felt that his cooperating teacher was constantly trying to get him to rush through material, so they could cover more ground. The problem with feeling like he was constantly rushed negatively impacted his experience. He also stated that he felt like he had to give answers away to the students instead of allowing the students adequate time to think. These two concepts of rushing and wait time played into his goals. His cooperating teacher also wouldn't allow him to deviate much from the plans that she set forth for him or use different materials than she was offering up to him. He described his relationship with his cooperating teacher when I asked him about a low point in his final clinical experience:

Natalie: What was a low point in your experience?

Jason: I would say honestly my relations with Mrs. Sullivan [cooperating teacher] were sometimes strained because she has one set way of doing things. If I deviated from that even a tiny bit, she'd get pretty upset. She didn't seem like she wanted to relinquish control of the classroom very much. I'm not trying to dump on her too much. She had a

lot of good qualities too, but this was the situation. She has a very strong personality.

She thought her way of doing things was ideal. She didn't give me a lot of latitude to do what I wanted to do.

He discussed the more positive elements of his relationship with his cooperating teacher and how their relationship worked in his interview as well:

Natalie: What did you learn from your cooperating teacher and other colleagues?

Jason: One thing I think she's really good with is explaining to me how to work with kids. I may have actually been holding too high of a standard at first. A little bit of compassion could help. For example, I was very strict with deadlines and late work. She showed me that you could hold the kids' hands a little more. I tend to think of them as individuals who should be more responsible. She showed me they still need a lot of guidance. She showed me it's not always bad to guide them a little more than I was.

Jason pointed to his university supervisor as an individual who gave him important feedback that he took to heart and that related to his instructional goals. His lesson reflections also reinforced his areas of weakness and his instructional goals and forced him to self-reflect on what was discussed when he conferenced with his university supervisor. His university supervisor agreed with his negative comments about his cooperating teacher, especially that she did not allow time for students to think; another criticism was how the cooperating teacher almost always graded papers on completion. Jason knows that this is not the most effective way to grade, and has taken this model into consideration of how to not encourage students' critical thinking and analysis skills. Additionally, in regards to student engagement, his university

supervisor pointed out that he tended to call on the same students who were eager and apt participants. She wanted to see him reaching out and engaging all of the students.

Natalie: What did you learn from conferencing with your supervisor?

Jason: I think she brought to light the fact that I probably favored certain students in the class. You know you go with them over and over again to answer questions. Instead of prodding the other kids. I needed to work on squeezing answers out of all of the kids.

That's something that I need to work on and hone more. She said that I dominated discussion too much. This was a problem because my cooperating teacher was always trying to get me to go faster. She thought I was moving too slow. I would ask kids a question and if they didn't get it, I would pretty much give them the answer right away. Obviously my university supervisor didn't like that! Next time I need to work more on putting the onus more on the students to figure out the answers for themselves.

Natalie: That's something you can work to develop. When you have your own classroom you can develop that culture of finding the answer.

Jason felt that his lesson reflections helped solidify what his university supervisor told him when they conferenced and served as a record of things he needed to remember and work on. The idea of reflecting and serving as a means of remembering things like wait time, calling on all students, and grading practices was important to Jason.

Jason said that for setting his goals, he knew that in setting his goals it was important to him to think back to his coursework that he had in college as well as focusing on his content knowledge in language arts in order to think about the idea. What does the ideal classroom look like he pondered in regards to student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom

management, and using assessment data? He states that his cooperating teacher and his university supervisor agreed with his goals and gave him more specific concepts to think about within each goal such as wait time with student engagement. When he thought about the ideal classroom, and what it would look like that is how he shaped his goals:

Jason: I thought each one represented an ideal classroom. Every kid being engaged might not actually be possible, but the goal is for every kid to participate. Differentiation I was thinking what would be ideal. I don't know if everything will be perfect. I don't know if I will be able to differentiate for every kid every single time, but the goal should be to do it every single time. But I will as much as possible. Classroom management is necessary otherwise no one is learning. Kids are disrupting and there's not a lot of education going on. I think pre-assessment data is important because obviously I need to know what level the kids are when they're starting out. I need to know whether they need to do redundant work. I don't want to start with work that's way above their heads.

Carrie had a very positive relationship with her cooperating teacher. She felt that her cooperating teacher was an exemplary teacher in many ways although she wants to modify her classroom management approach (one of her instructional goals) when she has her own classroom. Carrie was familiar with the school site and cooperating teacher where she did her final clinical experience because she had been placed at that school previously for an earlier field-experience component of her degree. Carrie focused on how she learned to manage parent relationships from her cooperating teacher specifically surrounding parent teacher conferences. Carrie was the one case study participant who specifically mentioned seeking out other teachers at her final clinical experience school site to talk out problems and see how things work in their

classrooms. She was able to maximize her time at her school site by observing other teachers and asking them questions during plan periods and other breaks. She discussed her relationship with her cooperating teacher and how her giving her feedback aided in her self-reflection in her interview:

Natalie: What did you learn from your cooperating teacher and other colleagues?

Carrie: I know I learned a lot. When I did Parent-Teacher conferences with my cooperating teacher, that was really nice. She let me do a lot of the conferences. Then, she would also provide feedback and showed me how she prepared. I thought that was good. And just talking to the other teachers. I would go around during plan or during breaks and I'd go into other classrooms and talk to teachers. I'd say, "I have this student doing x, how do you approach this? What do you do? Or, when do you an activity, and the students aren't engaged or on task, what do you do? What are your strategies?" I spent a lot of time talking to other teachers and talking to them. Because I don't know! I'm still figuring it all out.

Natalie: The teachers who are engaged love problem solving and analyzing that type of thing.

Carrie also felt she gained important feedback about her instruction from her university supervisor and the lesson reflections she was required to complete after her university supervisor came to see her in the classroom. Carrie felt that her supervisor was very influential and gave her a considerable amount of feedback and "food for thought" as well as suggestions for her future classroom. Carrie and her supervisor discussed how she could approach classroom management differently in the future which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Her



conferencing with her supervisor helped her gain insight into her goal setting process. Her university supervisor also highlighted questioning, wait-time, and having all students respond:

Natalie: What did you learn from conferencing with your supervisor?

Carrie: I loved my supervisor. He was great. I really liked bouncing ideas off of him, and getting suggestions on various things. We spent a lot of time talking about closure and ending lessons effectively. He also spent a lot of time talking to me about student engagement. The student engagement portion and how I want all students to be engaged. We spent a lot of time talking about how I could call on certain students without them feeling pressure and without putting them on the spot and thinking more than just the same students answering every time. Another thing we talked about that stuck with me was the idea of a chorus question when you ask the whole class a question and how it can lead to side conversations and how that can be avoided by asking direct questions. I really enjoyed my time talking with him.

Similarly, to what Heather and Jason noted about their lesson reflections, Carrie noted that being “forced” to do a reflection after a specific lesson made her examine specific ideas that were brought up in relation to her instructional goals, and her instructional goal areas. Carrie described the process as one that process that helped her put everything together—that is to synthesize, her own reflections, the reflections, comments, and recommendations of her cooperating teacher, and the reflections, comments, and recommendations from her university supervisor. Carrie said the following when asked about reflections on her instruction:

Natalie: What did you learn from completing your lesson reflections after your supervisory visits?

Carrie: It was a good time to sit down and think. I would make notes when I met with my university supervisor when we were talking, but it was a nice way to put everything together in one piece versus, sometimes you have a conversation with someone and then you forget what you talked about. The lesson reflection was a good way to look back and think about what he had talked about.

As evidenced by her university supervisor and the other mentors described in the case studies, the mentors influenced the teacher candidates in both positive and negative ways. The mentors gave the teacher candidates examples of both what to do in the classroom and what not to do in the classroom. The mentors pushed the teacher candidates to think differently. The applicability of what teacher candidates learn from the mentors during final clinical experience will be explored further in the next chapter.

### **Visioning forward with Instructional Goal Setting**

After examining the three cases presented for this study, it is important to think about how to use the information gained for the future. What implications will instructional goal setting have on teacher education preparation programs in future semesters? Heather said that for setting her goals she felt that she had enough self-knowledge about her strengths and weaknesses that she knew what to say for the four areas. She remembered back to her earlier field work in Practicum, General Methods, and Specialized Methods which she also did at her same school site to help her shape her instructional goals. She states that her cooperating teacher and her university supervisor echoed the same ideas in their conferences and communications. She says that she tried to think back to experiences she'd had earlier either in other classroom observations or in university coursework to think about what she knew were going to be her

problem areas and what she needed to know more about. Heather spoke about how she decided which goals to set and what her areas of weakness were in relation to the four areas of the Professional Competency Profile in our interview:

Natalie: In those four areas, how did you decide what goals to set?

Heather: I kind of looked at where maybe I needed improvement first. And, I think the one that I needed improvement in the most is differentiated lesson design. And, I think even still I want to work to find more information maybe even research a little bit how I can incorporate that better in my classroom. Other than that I tried to think of specific experiences that I'd had, and started thinking, "how could I have made this better?"

When I inquired with Heather about how these instructional goals will help to shape her first year of teaching she described two things: a support network and using her own person initiative to research and learn more in order to improve.

Natalie: How do you think you will work to meet your goals in your first year of teaching—especially if you're in Missouri you'll have to set up a learning profile where you can use these exact same goals?

Heather: I think hopefully I will have people to support me wherever I get hired. And, aside from that just going out and researching and finding information online that I can kind of look at what I'm doing and improve that.

Jason said the first two weeks of his final clinical experience were eye-opening especially in regards to student engagement. He said he knew what goals he should set for himself in the four areas and what his strengths and weaknesses would be based on the school and classroom where he was completing final clinical experience. He thought his cooperating teacher's content

knowledge was low in some areas, so he felt that compared to her that was a strength of his. He noted specific grammatical errors in written work and oral instruction from his cooperating teacher. He highlights his university supervisor more than his cooperating teacher as helping to shape his view of instructional goals and what he can do differently in the classroom in the future. Jason spoke about what he will do differently in relation to the four areas of the Professional Competency Profile in our interview:

Natalie: What will you do differently when you have your own classroom?

Jason: I won't give away answers as fast as I have been. I will make kids work for it a little more. I actually think that I will hold them to a higher quality standard. I noticed when she was grading things if they had anything at all on the page, they would get a 100% every time. I will be looking for correct answers not just any answers. I will probably have a tighter handle on the management. I felt like some of the classes were out of control, but I felt like it was hard to make it stricter at this point in the year. I didn't want to come in with a teacher that was a little looser, and then come in as a big hard ass. That clearly wouldn't work.

When I inquired with Jason about how these instructional goals will help to shape his first year of teaching he described how it's important to have goals to have something to strive for and it's important to think about what the "ideal" is for the classroom, so he can keep working to reach that:

Natalie: How will this instructional goal-setting process help you to be successful when you have your first job?

Jason: I think it's good to have a goal in mind. Setting goals is important because typically the goals you set are the ideal, and striving after the ideal will make you better

because it holds you to a higher standard. Maybe setting goals that are impossibly high to reach is good because you're always striving. Trying to get a little better and improve things.

As I mentioned before, Carrie had self-confidence throughout her final clinical experience, and she knew how to seek out resources and mentors to help her succeed. She set her goals using reflection and thinking about the ideal classroom and what she learned in her coursework. Carrie spoke about how she decided which goals to set and what her areas of weakness were in relation to the four areas of the Professional Competency Profile in our interview:

Natalie: When you set these goals, what was the process? How did you decide what goals to set?

Carrie: I kind of thought about things we've talked about in our coursework here at the university. I pulled from there. I just thought about things we did for student engagement and just different things we'd talked about in various classes. I pulled from that knowledge when I was thinking about what goals to set.

When I spoke with Carrie about how these instructional goals will help to shape her first year of teaching she described how it's important to use reflection as part of the teaching process and be able to use reflective skills in conjunction with the instructional goals in order to improve:

Natalie: How will this instructional goal-setting process help you to be successful when you have your first job?

Carrie: I think one of the biggest things will be spending time doing reflection, like self-reflection which can be difficult sometimes because you get so caught up, but I also want

to have a mentor who will be someone I can work with to help me during that reflection. Someone I can ask questions and go to with problems. I would want someone who will help me achieve them and help keep me on line with the goals.

Natalie: That can be a good interview question. What time of mentoring program do you offer? Will I be given a first year mentor?

## **Conclusion**

As discussed, all three teacher candidates successfully set instructional goals in the four focal areas of student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction. One teacher candidate revised or “reset” one of her goals after she reviewed the initial goals that she set two weeks into the final clinical experience semester. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors played a role in these instructional goals as well as giving insight and feedback on the actions and strategies and resources and support sections of the instructional goal setting document—the Professional Competency Profile.

As I analyzed data collected throughout this case study, it became clear that Heather, Jason, and Carrie all demonstrate “buy in” in the process of instructional goal setting and thought that the goals they set during their final clinical experience semester would be applicable and carry forward to their first professional job. Mansfield, Wosnitza, and Beltman (2012) describe instructional goal setting through a lens of teacher motivation and state that goal setting “has the potential benefits of unveiling purposes that underpin cognitions, behaviours, and affect, both of the individual and the individual in the teaching/classroom context (p. 22). We discussed the structure behind the Professional Competency Profile and how it focused the teacher candidates’ goal setting to four focal areas; the teacher candidates thought that having this focus to guide

their instructional goal setting process was very helpful—otherwise, it would have been too open-ended.

In addition, this case study revealed that teacher candidates rely on their university coursework for knowledge and pedagogy skills, but much of the real world experience comes from the classroom hours the teacher candidates spend with the cooperating teacher during the twelve-week final clinical experience. Teacher candidates felt prepared to continue to research best practices and revise the classroom instructional strategies and learning activities they used in the classroom during their final clinical experience to further hone their skills in student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction. The process of completing the instructional goal setting in the four prescribed areas prompted self-reflection in the teacher candidates about their areas of strengths and their areas of weakness.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Discussion**

#### **Goal Setting and Teacher Candidates**

By following the case study participants during their final clinical experience, I was able to examine their individual journeys in their final semester of teacher education preparation, observe how they performed in the classroom setting, learn how they worked with their cooperating teacher and university supervisor and understand how they assumed the role of lead teacher in the classroom. The interviews and the documents I analyzed provided me with rich insight into the teacher candidates' goal setting processes as they reflected on their journey to becoming a classroom teacher. This process has allowed me to respond to my research questions, which were the following:

1. What are the teacher candidate's initial goals and how do candidates reflect on their reasons for selecting these goals?
2. What are the teacher candidate's perceptions of their instructional goals as they reflect on their Final Clinical Experience?

#### **The Teacher Candidate's Journey**

**Research question one.** To respond to my two research questions, it is necessary to refer back to the findings in chapter four, and connect those findings with the research base on goals and goal-setting established in chapter two. In addition to the individual findings for each case study participant that were established in chapter four, I sought connections and themes amongst participants by examining differences and similarities in my data analysis process. The



individual findings tell the story, and the collective themes that are shown about goals and goal setting provide the framework for analysis and implications for University Programs and implications for future study in goals and goal setting.

Heather, Jason, and Carrie set goals as part of the Professional Competency Profile during their final clinical experience. The four areas where the participants set goals were: student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction. In chapter four, each case study participant was analyzed individually. This multi-case study focused on goals and goal setting where goals are subjective representations of what individuals would like to occur, or not to occur in the future and these in turn act as organizers for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Ford, 1992). To further the analysis and answer the research questions, the teacher candidates' goals are presented within each of the four areas:

Student engagement goals:

Heather-- Engage all students while taking notes—instead of some not paying attention or hoping to look at notes online later.

Jason-- Every student will be active and engaged in the day's lessons.

Carrie-- Promote increased student discussion, completion of assignments, and engagement in classroom activities.

All three case study participants used a form of the word “engage” (“engage,” “engaged,” and “engagement”) in their goal for student engagement. Heather and Carrie gave specific focus areas for the student engagement including: note taking, discussion, completion of assignments,

and classroom activities. Jason's goal was more open-ended and focused on the idea of active learning.

Differentiated lesson design:

Heather-- Incorporate differentiation more often in order to meet students' individual needs.

Jason-- Every student will receive properly differentiated instruction that suits his or her own needs.

Carrie--Develop and implement teaching techniques and strategies that meet a variety of learning needs. Provide for individual differences among students by providing and developing meaningful enrichment activities.

For the differentiated lesson design goal, all three case study participants incorporated the idea of "individual needs" ("students' individual needs," "his or her own needs," "variety of learning needs") into their goal. Heather focused on differentiating "more." Jason focused on differentiating "properly." Carrie was more specific incorporating the ideas of teaching techniques and strategies.

Classroom management goals:

Heather--Get the few disengaged students to re-engage so they are not distracting to the rest of the class—work on wait time for students' attention.

Jason-- The classroom will be orderly, respectful, non-disruptive, inviting, and intellectually stimulating.

Carrie-- Implement a behavior management plan that promotes self-discipline and maintains appropriate student behaviors.

A unifying theme that was seen in these three classroom management goals was the idea of “distraction” (“distractions,” “non-disruptive,” “appropriate student behaviors”) and how the classroom management plan needed to limit distractions in the classroom and thus promote “appropriate student behaviors” in the classroom as Carrie stated.

#### Using Assessment Data to Improve Instruction:

Heather-- Find more ways to integrate formative assessments into my self-reflection so I can better teach students to their needs.

Jason-- My pre-assessment data will reveal to me the current ability and knowledge level of my students, and thus inform my subsequent instruction. If, after a post-assessment, insufficient growth has taken place, further instruction in the neglected areas will take place.

Carrie-- Use data from assessments to make informed decisions about student learning. Analyze results from multiple assessment types (formative, summative, and other measures) to inform instruction and determine which strategies, materials, and resources will improve student achievement.

A unifying theme for the assessment data goals was the idea of formative assessments and how those assessment results will shape future subsequent instruction. Heather described this as “better teach students to their needs”. Jason stated that it will “inform my subsequent

instruction,” and similarly Carrie stated that classroom assessments will “inform instruction.”

The idea that the case study participants will use formative assessment results to make classroom decisions for instruction was evident in all three goals.

The driving definition from Ford (1992) for goals that described both what the individual would like to occur and not to occur in the future was clear in all of the goals that the case study participants set. For example, Heather was seeing disengaged students, and she didn’t want that to occur in the future, so she included that in her student engagement goal. On the other hand, Carrie wanted to see self-discipline in her students, so she included what she would like to occur in her student engagement goal. The unifying themes amongst the goals of engagement, focusing on individual needs, limiting distraction, and formative assessment demonstrated what is significant to these teacher candidates during their final clinical experience. These four domains of instruction clearly showed to the teacher candidates, the university supervisors, the cooperating teachers, and beyond the triad—the university faculty and other stakeholders what was significant to the teacher candidates in the four instructional goal setting areas of the Professional Competency Profile.

Hagger and Malmberg (2011) add to Ford’s definition of goals by stating that goals are objects in mind that the individual hopes for, wishes, desires, aspires to, and wants to approach. As stated in chapter four, only one case study participant, Carrie, changed any of the instructional goals from the initial goal setting to the final goal setting at the conclusion of their final clinical experience. The concepts behind Hagger and Malmberg’s goals definition speak to why the case study participants largely didn’t alter their goals. Based on their university coursework, and self-knowledge and reflection, the case study participants knew what they

hoped for and wished for in the four goal setting areas for their classroom. The goals they set for themselves carried forward, and could be the goals they set for themselves for their first job and their first professional development plan. Based on their university coursework as well as their earlier field-work experiences, the case study participants knew what the ideal was for their instructional practice.

The second part of the first research question is answered in how Jason described his goal setting process as fitting in with Hagger and Malmberg's ideas of what he hopes for and wishes for his classroom. He described each of his four instructional goals by saying, "I thought each one represented an ideal classroom." Dewey (1933) describes his model for reflection as one that considers reflection to be a special form of problem solving, or thinking how to resolve an issue. Self-reflection was evident in the other two case study participants as they reflected on their reasons for selecting these goals. Heather and Carrie demonstrated Dewey's ideas about reflection as a problem solving methodology: Heather demonstrated self-reflection when she states, "I kind of looked at where maybe I needed improvement first." Heather also remembered her previous coursework she'd taken at the university that involved fieldwork: her Practicum, General Methods, and Special Methods courses. She remembered what she felt like she needed to work on from those classes. Carrie stated a similar reflection on her coursework: Carrie focused on the coursework that she'd taken at the university and she says she "pulled from there. I pulled from that knowledge when I was thinking about what goals to set." The frame that Dewey established for reflection functioning as a special type of problem solving is a critical process for teacher candidates during their final clinical experience and their first years of teaching.

**Triad.** The triad (Slick, 1997) which consists of the teacher candidate, the university supervisor, and the cooperating teacher was an integral part of each case study participants' experience for their final clinical experience. In addition to self-reflection, the reflection that was spurred by the conferencing with their cooperating teacher and their university supervisor played into their instructional goal setting process. Freese (2006) described reflection as "frame[ing] and reframe[ing] thinking." Carrie demonstrated the reflective ability to reframe when she considers her university supervisor's suggestion to Carrie to give students more "buy-in" in the behavior management plan for her classroom caused her to alter her classroom management goal in her final copy. Jason's reflection about how his cooperating teacher was driving the pace of instruction in the classroom even when he was the lead teacher, and the lack of wait time and in essence what Jason described as "giving away the answers" caused him to reflect on his classroom experience and how that influenced his instructional goals. Sometimes what cooperating teachers do in the classroom and in their relationship with their teacher candidate during the final clinical experience can actually play into what Ford describes as what they do not want to occur. Universities hope that cooperating teachers will be mentors to teacher candidates and demonstrate excellent instructional practices at all times, but this is not the reality in many cases. In addition to the goals that were set, the actions and strategies and resources and support sections of the Professional Competency Profile were also influenced by the other members of the triad.

The triad is a critical element in the teacher candidate's final clinical experience. A fully functioning triad that has good avenues of communication is what the university hopes for when it requests a cooperating teacher and then matches a university supervisor with the teacher candidate. A teacher candidate who displays a coachable attitude is one who often works best

with his/her cooperating teacher. Carrie had a very coachable attitude in working with her university supervisor, and she had an excellent cooperating teacher whom she could model her classroom instructional practices. Jason, on the other hand, while still having a coachable attitude with his university supervisor, was mainly noting instructional practices that he did not want to take into his classroom practice which can be challenging for teacher candidates who are looking for the best examples and using their reflective skills in incorporate those practices into their own teaching.

**Research question two.** Research question two focused on what the teacher candidate's perceptions of their instructional goals as they reflect on their final clinical experience. All three teacher candidates successfully set instructional goals in the four areas. It was clear from the data that was gathered that the three teacher candidates all felt they had areas of growth that could be addressed through their instructional goal setting process. Heather, Jason, and Carrie all demonstrated "buy in" in the process of instructional goal setting. In their interviews, it was stated that they thought that the goals that they set during their final clinical experience semester for their Professional Competency Profile would be applicable and could carry forward to their first professional job in the classroom. The three case study participants also agreed that they liked having the four areas to set goals in laid out for them. They understood how these four areas were tied to the larger Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES) and the performance assessment they were completing concurrently, the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment (MoPTA). The alignment was clear to them, and they felt that it they could have set any goal that came to mind that would have been too open-ended. Jason demonstrated his perception of research question two when he described his perception of goal setting as he reflected on his final clinical experience by stating: "Setting goals is important because typically the goals you

set are the ideal, and striving after the ideal will make you better because it holds you to a higher standard.”

Thus, through this discussion of the findings to the two research questions it is clear what these three case study participants set as initial instructional goals for themselves, how they reflected on selecting these goals, and what their perceptions of their instructional goals were as they reflect back on their final clinical experience. This discussion shows that it is clear that the case study participants had a positive perception of the instructional goal setting process and understood how this was a valuable exercise in their reflective teaching skill set.

### **University Program Preparation and Implications—first implication**

There are five areas of implications to be considered from this study: University program preparation, formal measures and Missouri assessments, coursework and goal-setting instruction, collaborating and mentoring, and teacher education preparation program connections. The first implication area to be explored is University Program Preparation. Final clinical experience is a paradoxical time in a teacher candidate’s educational experience. Teacher candidates describe the time as a cornerstone to their education and Valencia et al. (2009) denotes the importance of the experience by calling it legendary, but at the same time teacher candidates are feeling the “crunch” of all of their commitments and requirements coming together in their final semester. The planning, classroom instruction, classroom management, parent relationships, and classroom assessment all sit on the teacher candidate’s shoulders while they are also taking university coursework on campus as well as completing the large performance assessment they have to do for certification—the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment. The teacher candidates also



must complete the Professional Competency Profile as part of their experience which has been the focus of this instructional goal setting dissertation. One of the case study participants, Carrie, described this overwhelming feeling stating, “I think one of the most challenging things was time management. Especially having this state test in conjunction with the final clinical experience. Doing it all at the same time was a challenge.” Teacher candidates become so overwhelmed with everything on their plate during their final clinical experience that at times it seems like they are barely keeping their head above the water. Many teacher candidates have other commitments above and beyond what has already been listed. Some teacher candidates have families of their own and the responsibilities that go along with a family, or have to work part-time while completing final clinical experience in order to pay rent and tuition during this time of not being paid. All of the teacher candidates including the three case study participants I highlight as part of this study turned in all of the parts of the MoPTA on time this semester, but over three percent of students state-wide missed at least one deadline and are having to participate in the re-submission process for this assessment. This will delay the teacher candidate’s teaching license and potentially delay their employment.

### **Formal measures and Missouri assessments—second implication**

The Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment is a clear indication that the state of Missouri is demonstrating a need for formal measures for teacher candidates. This idea is echoed nationally and at the state-level across the country as Departments of Education have been focusing on the need to assess future teachers and have them “prove” their competence in the classroom. Missouri previously used the “Teacher Work Sample” and has transitioned as part of their educational reform called “Top 20 by 20” (Missouri Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education, 2014). The Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile are examples of “multiple measures” assessments which assess a variety of skills such as: pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge, reflective skills, and professional dispositions (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, and Rothstein, 2012). This puts considerable pressure on the teacher candidates during their final clinical experience. Not only do teacher candidates need to just make it through the twelve-week final clinical experience, but while doing so, they must write approximately forty to fifty pages of content that will be graded by an external grading service—the Educational Testing Service. And, the score on that is contingent on whether the teacher candidate is eligible for their teaching license or not. The Professional Competency Profile must also be successfully completed and signed by the teacher candidate’s cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Currently, the Professional Competency Profile is not graded by ETS, it is graded by the student’s institution, but there is discussion that it could transition to being assessed by ETS in the future.

The implications for this overwhelming time in a teacher candidate’s life are that universities need to do everything they can to effectively prepare teacher candidates not only for the stress of the final clinical experience and how to cope with it, but also “back-map” elements of the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile into coursework prior to the final clinical experience semester. Teacher education programs across the state of Missouri can make productive use of the information in order to help their teacher candidates be successful. This all-encompassing aspect to final clinical experience is currently being examined by a work group of fifteen individuals from across the state of Missouri. They are formulating a proposal to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Missouri and the Educational Testing Service about revisions to the Missouri Pre-Service

Teacher Assessment, so it's not so overpowering to teacher candidates. The work group is recommending the collapse of Tasks two and three to greatly reduce the pages required and overall work required for this document. Task two focuses on assessment, and Task three focuses on designing instruction. The work group suggests that these tasks could be combined and therefore less redundant if they were combined. The work group is also recommending a closer tie between the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment and the Professional Competency Profile with possible reflective questions at the end of the Professional Competency Profile about how the teacher candidate chose the goals and why these were the goals chosen. Although the tie between the two was evident to the case study participants for this study, I do not believe all teacher candidates are seeing the connection and how the Missouri Quality Indicators drive all of this content and assessment. So, possibly the improvements that the work group is recommending will come into place in the 2017-2018 school year and improve this process. The reduction in work required for the formal performance assessment would allow teacher candidates to more fully immerse themselves in their instructional goal setting process, as well as other classroom demands like planning, instruction, and classroom assessment which should be the true focus of the final clinical experience.

A reduction in the overwhelming requirements would also allow teacher candidates to explore their professional identity more. Gee (2000) describes the development of the professional identity as when future teachers examine their beliefs, attitudes, and understandings about the world and how they will apply those ideas to the classroom. The shaping and development of the professional identity and the idea of being a "professional" in the classroom is what the final clinical semester should be about. The shaping of the professional identity and what the teacher candidate's areas of weakness and areas of strength can be highlighted through

the instructional goal setting process as framed by the Missouri Quality Indicators and the Professional Competency Profile.

### **Coursework implications and goal-setting instruction—third implication**

Another area where teacher education can make more productive use of pre-service teachers' instructional goal setting is to examine coursework specifically in regards to the four goal areas: student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and assessment data. In analyzing the teacher candidates' goals, they overall were quite general and global in nature. The assessment data goals from the three case study participants were the most specific with different areas named that the teacher candidate wanted to work on (formative assessment, strategies, materials, and resources, insufficient growth). On the other hand, the student engagement goals were very general: the student engagement goals for example used "engagement" in the goal set by all three teacher candidates and did not expand on specifically how the engagement or active learning would be accomplished in the classroom. Coursework and specific instructional strategies and learning activities for each of the four goal areas needs to be addressed and be "back-mapped" to ensure all of the areas are covered several times in several different classes prior to the teacher candidate reaching final clinical experience. This would give teacher candidates more pedagogical knowledge to write effective and more specific goals for their instructional goals. As far as coursework goes, all three case study participants felt that they needed the most support and resources and strategies for differentiated lesson design. That instructional goal area is really hard to understand how it relates to the learners in the classroom until you are really there. So, increased coursework in differentiation and possibly a study of case studies to make differentiation come alive to the students would be beneficial.

The university where this study was conducted realized the lack of knowledge in differentiation and has restructured and renamed General Methods to be “General Methods and Differentiated Instruction.” This was a change in the 2015-2016 course catalog, so the teacher candidates in this study did not take the revised course. It was still just General Methods when they took the course. So, hopefully as teacher candidates come up through the program and take the revised course, they will have more specific knowledge for instructional strategies and learning activities for differentiated lesson design.

Additionally, teacher candidates could practice writing instructional goals for themselves after their other field-work classes that they take in the coursework sequence. Teacher candidates could write goals after their forty-hour Practicum field-work assignment, then again after their General Methods field-work, and then again during their Special Methods field-work. This would allow teacher candidates to self-reflect about specific areas of growth and would also incorporate other supervisors and professors into the goal-setting process. The professors for both Practicum and General Methods could incorporate a mini-unit about goal-setting and the Professional Competency Profile and how this will relate to their final clinical experience. Also, more instructional time could be spent on how to write specific, measureable goals. The class time that teacher candidates spend during their final clinical experience semester is fairly brief on campus compared to the in-class time during Practicum and General Methods. Plus, there are so many other topics to cover during Seminar class. The additional instruction from the other professors leading into the experience would be very beneficial. For example, I offered as part of my instruction in Seminar to the case study participants to structure their goals in the format, “the teacher candidate will...” and none of the case study participants followed that format in their goals that they submitted. Teacher candidates could really work to refine their goals over

the course of their degree. They could perhaps even reach the goals they've set, and work to set new goals, or extend the goals they'd previously set. The Missouri Educator Profile is a work-place skills inventory that students take while they are in Practicum. Teacher candidates are expected to go over the results of the Missouri Educator Profile with their advisor, but this tool could be leveraged more in the instructional goal setting process to help students see what their areas of weaknesses are.

### **Collaborating and mentoring—fourth implication**

Another area of teacher education that would benefit from the use of pre-service teachers' instructional goal setting is the "triad". Since instructional goal-setting and the Professional Competency Profile were a new tool used across the state of Missouri for the 2015-2016 academic year, it was not a process that cooperating teachers nor university supervisors had taken part of with their teacher candidates before. The teacher candidate must seek signatures from both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor on the professional competency profile, and it is encouraged that both individuals support the instructional goals set by the teacher candidates and mentor the candidates in writing their goals. The goals that are written and set could be improved in quality with increased discussion amongst the triad. This process will improve with time as the stakeholders become more comfortable with the process. Additional training will be provided at the university supervisor trainings before each semester, and additional communications will be sent to the cooperating teachers giving tips and information about the professional competency profile. This process could also open up more three-way conferences between the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. The three people together could discuss areas of weakness and what goals should be

set for the teacher candidate. Sometimes university supervisors notice things that cooperating teachers don't see in the classroom. And, conversely the cooperating teacher spends much more time with the teacher candidate in the classroom than the university supervisor does, so they might notice different elements. Many times the university supervisor doesn't include the cooperating teacher in the post-observation conference. Often, it's not because they don't want to, but because someone needs to teach the class while the teacher candidate conferences with the university supervisor. By prioritizing a three-way conference, another solution could be found so they could all meet together.

The relationship and the actual model of the triad can be tricky to maneuver as the power is ever-shifting in this model. Since the cooperating teacher and the student teacher spend the most time together, their relationship can be disrupted and the "subsequent power shift" that occurs when the University Supervisor comes for a visit (Slick, p. 109).

Ritchie, Rigano, and Lowry (2000) discussed power relations in the triad and use the philosopher Foucault as a basis of their analysis. Foucault shaped the idea that "power was not a commodity that could be possessed by some privileged person or group that ensured their continued dominance over weaker or less privileged subjects" (p. 165). To elaborate on that idea, they went on to say that "no one has unequivocal power and individuals can be both powerful and powerless at the same time" (p. 166). Rikard and Veal (1998) examined the power issues and relations in the triad that go back to Caplow's 1998 work by noting that "the cooperating teacher and student teacher work closely together on a daily basis, creating a professional dyad. There is great potential for a relational disturbance when this dyad received a third member due to the occasional presence of the university supervisor and the subsequent power shift (p. 109). To describe this critical cooperating teacher relationship: Goodnough, Osmond,

Dibbon, Glassman, and Stevens (2009) stated “individual student teachers are supported by purposeful coaching from a cooperating teacher who offers modeling, co-planning, frequent feedback, repeated opportunities for practice, and reflection upon practice, while the student teacher gradually assumes more responsibility for teaching (p. 285). The three case study participants felt and used this “purposeful coaching” to help shape their instructional practices during their final clinical experience.

### **Connections—fifth implication**

Teacher education preparation programs could also improve teacher candidates’ understanding of how these elements are connected: the University curriculum, the Missouri Quality Indicators, the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment, the Teacher Candidate Summative Assessment, and the Professional Competency Profile. I feel that this semester’s teacher candidate had a below average or average understanding of the connectedness of the above elements. The Summative assessment that the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher complete assess sixteen of the thirty-two Quality Indicators. These are the same Quality Indicators that are assessed as part of the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment, and then four of those Quality Indicators are the four instructional goal-setting areas in the Professional Competency Profile. It is my opinion that if pre-service teacher candidates understood this framework and how these elements are organized and framed (as discussed in chapter two) that the knowledge and understanding of these high stakes assessments during the final clinical experience would be better understood, and the teacher candidates would be more well prepared. If students knew the “big four” were student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and assessment data, then they could focus their attentions to those areas and seek



resources and mentors to help them in areas of need. I know if I asked my undergraduate students who are earlier in the program about the Quality Indicators and what those mean for their education, they wouldn't know what I'm talking about. I'm going to discuss this foundational knowledge with the Practicum and General Methods and Differentiated Instruction professors as well. Since I am the Seminar teacher and see how all of these elements come together in the final clinical experience, I'm not even sure that the other professors fully see the connectedness. By focusing on unity and coherence which could be demonstrated through "back-mapping" of critical content back through the coursework sequence and focusing on using common terminology throughout all of the courses, the teacher candidates and professors could realize the connectedness earlier and understand it more.

In summation, I recommend a reduction in work load in the final clinical experience semester, a revision in University coursework to focus on the four instructional goal-setting areas, increased goal-writing instruction, increased collaboration and mentoring amongst the triad, and an increase in an understanding of connectedness in the Quality Indicators. I feel that five areas of implications will greatly impact teacher education and make more productive use of teacher candidates' instructional goal setting process.

### **Future Possibilities for Goal Setting in Teacher Education**

In addition to the five implications for teacher education discussed in the previous section, there are other future possibilities for goal setting in teacher education. As teacher candidates develop their professional identities and determine what their areas of strengths and areas of weaknesses are and how that impacts the instructional goals they set for themselves, it is notable to consider how these goals can transfer to the first year of teaching. If a teacher

candidate is hired by a Missouri public school after graduation, then the teacher candidate will continue on with the Missouri Educator Evaluation system that was used during their final clinical experience for evaluation and assessment. The teacher candidates will now be on the full continuum for practicing teachers. This will be valuable to the teacher candidates because they will be familiar with the continuum and the evaluation system since they will be evaluated by principals their first three years of teaching. Teacher candidates will be well-prepared in the Quality Indicator areas, and especially be well-prepared in the four areas that are part of the Professional Competency Profile. Principals have described the Professional Competency Profile as a bridge between the higher education institution and the public school classroom setting. Additionally, principals and Human Resources personnel can review teacher candidate's Professional Competency Profiles during the interview process to learn more about the teacher candidate and where they're coming from. This will also ease the evaluation process during the first year for both the first year teacher and the principal because some of the work for the evaluation will already be complete. When I was department chair of a large English department at a large high school, I would evaluate five teachers per academic year some of whom would be brand-new teachers. I would have liked seeing the completed Professional Competency Profile as I was evaluating the first-year teacher. It would have given me insight into their instructional choices as well as their areas of strengths and weaknesses. As mentoring amongst the triad increases as previously discussed, the Professional Competency Profile and the instructional goals will have even more meaning and depth.

Additionally, a large scale analysis of teacher candidates' instructional goals could be done to better understand how to support teacher candidates and new teachers. The analysis could show what holes in coursework there are, and what changes to the state-wide matrix of

courses could be made at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education level. These stakeholders will gain useful information about teacher candidates and their professional identities, how teacher candidates engage in reflection, what goals teacher candidates commonly set, and what teacher candidates commonly see as areas of strengths and weaknesses. This would be valuable information for top-down reform that would affect all of the educator preparation programs in the state. Then, the results could be generalized nation-wide as well.

Another possibility for a future implication would be the examination of these results at the Kansas City Metro Clinical Partnerships meetings. This group consists of Human Resources personnel and principals from Kansas City area (both the Kansas and Missouri side) as well as educator preparation professionals from universities in the Kansas City area. This group would find value in seeing the instructional goal-setting process that teacher candidates complete and opening a dialog about how this would transition to a first-year teaching position. I would like to discuss with the district personnel specifically what is expected for goals that first-year teachers set to see if it is in line with the instructional goals that are set as part of the Professional Competency Profile. Aligning the two processes would be helpful and would create a seamless process as teacher candidates transition to the classroom. It could also open a dialog about first year mentoring and what the high needs areas are for teacher candidates transitioning to being a first-year teacher. How to differentiate in the classroom and what that means in the district where they are hired should be a topic of mentoring and assistance for first-year teachers as demonstrated by this study.

A topic that has been examined the Kansas City Metro Clinical Partnership has been how to select triads that will work well together. As demonstrated by Jason's relationship with his cooperating teacher where he felt like she was calling the shots, pacing his instruction, and

giving away answers, he would have had a very different final clinical experience if he'd had a different cooperating teacher, perhaps one who was stronger in content knowledge and pedagogy. Even though his cooperating teacher had been teaching for a long time, that is not always an indicator that the cooperating teacher will work well with a teacher candidate. Other times the university supervisor doesn't "gel" well with the teacher candidate and/or the cooperating teacher. The teacher candidate is put in a "hard place" because these are the people who will be assigning the teacher candidate a grade at the end of the final clinical experience, so of course they don't want to offend them or cause any problems. The Metro Clinical Partnership has been examining different ideas about how to best match up teacher candidates with effective and willing cooperating teachers. A "draft" approach where universities bring forward their teacher candidates and school districts bring forward their best cooperating teachers who are qualified to host teacher candidates, and then seek solid partnerships. This foundation of a partnership between the cooperating teacher and the teacher candidate would lead to better mentoring and avoiding "bad apple" cooperating teachers.

### **Implications for Future Study**

As this study was a multi-case study, it is limited in its scope and generalizability, so future researchers may consider performing a large scale content evaluation of teacher candidates' instructional goals that would cover a larger number of teacher candidates. A review of a larger set of goals could illuminate connecting themes and ideas that were not revealed by this study. Additionally, future studies might seek a different population of teacher candidates to research possibly teacher candidates who have previously had a different career, teacher candidates over the age of forty, or teacher candidates from a specific socioeconomic group to

see if there are similarities and differences of note. Since all three case study participants were secondary language arts teacher candidates, a future study could also examine different content areas and different grade levels. If the work group succeeds in reducing the work load required of teacher candidates during their final clinical experience in regards to the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment, it could be worthwhile to see if teacher candidates are able to allot more time and thought to the Professional Competency Profile and conference more with their university supervisor and their cooperating teacher about their goals.

The educational landscape is a hopeful one for teacher candidates who are finishing their final clinical experience and launching into looking for their first classroom teaching position. Even a teacher candidate who had a hard time connecting with a particular student or a cooperating teacher who had trouble relinquishing control is quickly overshadowed by the thought of having a classroom of their own where they can impact students' lives. In Swinkels, Koopman, and Beijaard's 2013 article, they posited that student teachers have trouble moving beyond their own needs to focus on students' learning. They stated:

student teachers are often thought to progress through the following stages of development: being concerned with themselves and how to survive as teachers; being concerned with the teaching situation; and finally having concerns that pertain more to student learning. This last stage is often realized after having finished teacher education.  
(p. 26)

They say that "if student teachers make what and how students learn a priority, they can better adjust the curriculum, pedagogy, and lessons to their students' needs" (p. 26). I feel that today's teacher candidates in 2016 are better equipped to focus on students' needs and being

effective teachers due to their instructional goal setting and preparation for the classroom.

Heather, Jason, and Carrie helped demonstrate their readiness to meet students' needs by writing goals for and reflecting on: student engagement, differentiated lesson design, classroom management, and using assessment data to improve instruction.

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## APPENDIX A

### Missouri's Professional Competency Profile

The goal of the Professional Competency Profile is to improve instruction. This document is for organizing your learning and growth as you complete your student-teaching experience. Each plan is unique to the individual teacher candidate, and each plan is based on your self-assessment and on feedback from your EPP supervisor/faculty and cooperating teacher. The intent of this document is to support your professional growth through identification of goals, actions/strategies. Resources/support/assistance, and intended results that are of value to you as a growing professional.

**Teacher Candidate:**

**Certification:**

**Educator Preparation Program:**

**Grade Levels:**

<b>Standard &amp; Quality Indicators</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Resources &amp; Support</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Standard 1.2</b>  <b>Student Engagement</b>  <b>MoPTA Task 4</b>				
<b>Standard 2.4</b>  <b>Differentiated Lesson Design</b>  <b>MoPTA Tasks 1-2-3-4</b>				
<b>Standard 5.1</b>  <b>Classroom Management</b>  <b>MoPTA Task 1 &amp; 2</b>				

<b>Standard 7.2</b>  <b>Using Assessment Data to Improve Instruction</b>  <b>MoPTA Task 1 &amp; 2</b>				
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Teacher Candidate Signature:

Date:

Date:

Date:

Reviewed By EPP Supervisor/Faculty:

Reviewed By Cooperating Teacher:

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Teacher Candidate Interview Protocol—Mid-semester interview**

1. Tell me about your Final Clinical Experience.
2. What has a highlight of your experience been so far?
3. What has been a low point in your experience so far?
4. How did you decide what goals to set?
5. How do you think you will work to meet your goals in your first year of teaching?
6. Tell me about student engagement in your classroom. Give a specific example.
7. Tell me about classroom management. Give a specific example.
8. How have you approached differentiation and working with focus students?
9. Tell me about how you have approached assessment in your classroom.
10. What is the biggest impact you have had so far on the students in your classroom? What will they remember?
11. What have you learned so far from conferencing with your supervisor?
12. What have you learned so far from completing your lesson reflections after your supervisory visits?
13. What have you learned so far from your cooperating teacher and other colleagues?
14. What will you do differently when you have your own classroom?

### **Teacher Candidate Interview Protocol—Post-semester interview**

1. Tell me about your Final Clinical Experience.
2. What was a highlight of your experience?
3. What was a low point in your experience?
4. How did you decide what goals to set?
5. How do you think you will work to meet your goals in your first year of teaching?
6. Tell me about student engagement in your classroom. Tell me about your engagement goal.
7. Tell me about classroom management. Tell me about your classroom management goal.
8. How did you approach differentiation and working with focus students?
9. Tell me about how you approached assessment in your classroom. Tell me about your assessment goal.
10. What is the biggest impact you had on the students in your classroom? What will they remember?
11. What did you learn from conferencing with your supervisor?
12. What did you learn from completing your lesson reflections after your supervisory visits?
13. What did you learn from your cooperating teacher and other colleagues?
14. What will you do differently when you have your own classroom?
15. How will this instructional goal-setting process help you to be successful when you have your first job?



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Human Subjects Committee Approval**

#### **Instructional Goals EXPLORED: TEACHER CANDIDATES IN THE FINAL CLINICAL EXPERIENCE**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Curriculum & Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

##### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative case study explores teacher candidates' instructional goals for a cohort of Final Clinical Experience students at a small, private University in the Midwest. The researcher will interview teacher candidates who are currently student teaching during the spring semester of 2016 seeking answers to the following research questions: 1. What are the teacher candidate's initial goals for Final Clinical Experience? 2. How do instructional practice goals change with increased teaching responsibility? 3. What influenced changes in the teacher candidate's goals over the course of the Final Clinical Experience?

##### **PROCEDURES**

This study will be based upon a qualitative emergent design model. Participants will take part in four activities during the course of the study: pre- and post-goal setting (Professional Competency Profile) and mid- and post-experience interviews.

The researcher will interview eight preservice English teachers student teaching during spring 2016. The participants will be interviewed in the spring of 2016 with a series of up to 2 20 minute interviews regarding their experiences student teaching. There will be an mid-point formal interview and a second formal interview toward the end of the student teaching experience, with the possibility of subsequent informal interviews drawn from the data in the first two interviews and based upon grounded theory design (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some of the prompts that will frame the interview include:

- Tell me about your Final Clinical Experience.
- What was a highlight of your experience?
- What was a low point in your experience?
- How did you decide what goals to set?
- How do you think you will work to meet your goals in your first year of teaching?

Interviews will be recorded, and the interviewer will take notes and observations during the interview. These interviews will be audio recorded with the consent of the participants, who may choose to not be recorded or to stop that recording at any time. Natalie Cobb will transcribe the recordings after the interviews. Only Natalie Cobb will have access to the recordings, and the recordings will be erased completion of the project.

Once data has been collected, it will then be thematically coded using constant comparison and open coding techniques.

This information will only be used for this study's purposes. It will be destroyed when the research project is completed. During the project, research notes, documents, and audio recordings will be stored in locked filing cabinets. Reports will be written, and the documents and notes will be included in the reports. Your name will be changed to protect your identity. Only the researchers will see this data.

## RISKS

We anticipate no risks to participants in this study.

## BENEFITS

Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help the educational research community develop a better understanding of the perceptions of new teachers regarding excellence in teaching and the goals of teacher education.

## PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

There will be no compensation provided to participants.

## GRADES

Grades for ED 494 will not be impacted in any way by participation in this research project.

## PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

## REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

## CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Natalie Cobb, Department of Curriculum & Teaching, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm. 321, 1122 West Campus Road, Lawrence, KS 66045.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

## PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____	_____
Type/Print Participant's Name	Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Initial here to consent to audio recording during interviews

### Researcher Contact Information

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